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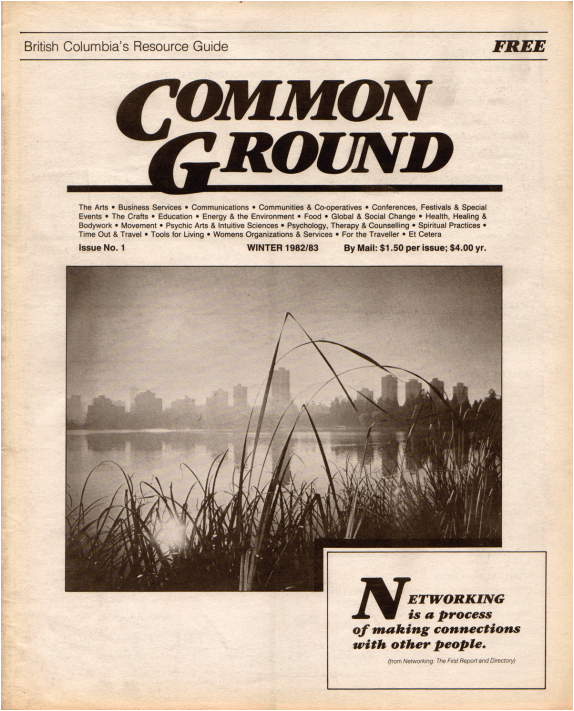
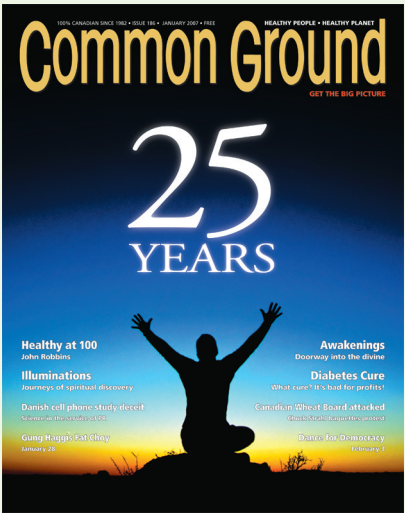
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Photo: © Amygdalaimagery



Our first cover, winter 1982.

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The awakening

Magic doorway into the divine

by Devrah Laval

I guess it was my time or, rather, God's time. I was 29 years old. I had a good husband and I was a successful model and dancer. By conventional standards, I had an enviable life and yet I felt somehow empty. Something was haunting me.

Then, during a routine check-up, my doctor told me that my uterus had completely dissolved and I would never menstruate again. I would never have any children. I was devastated by the



news and was telling a friend about it when she told me about an upcoming workshop designed to take participants to enlightenment, provided they were willing to apply themselves. I felt a surging force of desire, stronger than anything I had ever known. My simple response was "I must go."

We both forgot about my uterus.

Getting myself to the workshop was surprisingly difficult. When I told Jeff, my husband, he said, "You can't go." He had never tried to prevent me from doing anything before, but this time he was not only adamant, but angry. I felt that I was fighting for my life. I told him I was going anyway. The next day I asked my boss if I could take Saturday off, but he refused. Like my husband, he was adamant. I told him I was sorry but I must go. By the time I left for the weekend, I had no idea if I would have a job or a marriage when I returned on Monday. But I felt as if something greater was driving me and I had no control over it.

Sleeping bag in hand, I was dropped off at an old retreat lodge for monks outside the city. Everything was white and austere. No flowers. No colour. There was one tiny closet for everyone's clothes. Each small bedroom had eight hard bunk beds. It was an icy night in November and everything felt harsh, cold and naked. I just wanted to go home, but I also knew I had already crossed the line and there was no returning.

I was ushered downstairs to the work-

shop room with the other participants where we were welcomed with herbal tea and honey. All of our valuables were collected, packaged and stored away for safekeeping. We were not allowed to wear watches, jewellery, makeup or cologne. Nor were we allowed to drink coffee or eat anything other than the macrobiotic food provided.

We were told that during the workshop we would be paired off and face our partners for one-hour intervals in which we would take turns asking each other one question, "Tell me who you are." We would have an uninterrupted period of time to answer and then we'd

"Who am I?" became my mantra.

By bedtime, I was so sick and exhausted I thought I would die. I fell into the bunk and slept a bit. At 5 AM the morning bell rang, announcing the beginning of day two. I couldn't believe that we could be so tortured. To the bathroom and then down to the workshop room to sit in front of another partner with bad breath saying to me, "Tell me who you are."

I was getting angry and the pain in my head was getting worse. I thought of running away, but there was no transportation back to the city. Breakfast passed, showering, more partner work,

I rolled around on the floor in fits of ecstasy, laughing at all of the lifelong beliefs that I was just this body and its desires, hopes and dreams. I wanted to share my joy with some of my other partners, but they just sat there looking at me as if I were insane.

switch roles. After an hour, we'd change partners and continue. This would go on for 18 hours each day, apart from breaks for meals and to rest.

The first night we did a few exercises to prepare ourselves, to get to know one another and to learn the technique. At the end of the evening, we collapsed into our hard, cold bunks. Nobody slept. We were awakened at 5 AM. It was horribly cold, I got up, stumbled to the bathroom and made my way to the workshop room where I sat across from a half-asleep stranger who said, "Tell me who you are."

I was miserable. I am not a morning person and have a great aversion to talking to anyone without at least a cup of tea first, but then breakfast arrived. I had a chance to shower and returned to the routine. The sun slowly began to shine and I began to feel better. Even my partners became more interesting and alive as they too began to warm to the routine. Alternating every few minutes, we continued with "Tell me who you are."

I enjoyed baring my soul in this very safe environment, however, the facilitator warned us: "Stay focused on experiencing and communicating the absolute truth of who you really are." Hours went by, lunch came and went, more cleaning, more exercises. The room began to take on a palpable quality of otherworldliness. It was surreal. Day turned to night and I was exhausted. My head began to ache, but I had to keep going. "Who am I? Who am I?" over and over again.

lunch. The pain and frustration were getting worse for all of us. Many had vomit bags next to them. The pain in my head was unbearable; I felt as though it was about to explode. Finally, at about 4 PM, every cell in my body felt like it was being crushed. I couldn't bear it anymore. My partner said, "Tell me who you are."

I looked him straight in the eye and said with the most rage I had ever expressed in my life, "Who the hell do you think I am?" Then with great force, I screamed out, "I am me." At that moment, I heard a huge cracking sound at the top of my head. Suddenly, I was free of all of my aches, pains and limitations. Perhaps this is how death feels.

I became a very large presence. The facilitator noticed and came rushing over, asking, "Who are you?" I replied, "I am me." I couldn't describe in words this all-pervasive experience of freedom and knowing, but the "me" I felt was not my body or personality. "I am God!" I said. Then I pointed to myself and said, "This is God. I am!"

The facilitator laughed heartily. I began to laugh uncontrollably and fell off my chair. I rolled around on the floor in fits of ecstasy, laughing at all of the lifelong beliefs that I was just this body and its desires, hopes and dreams. I wanted to share my joy with some of my other partners, but they just sat there looking at me as if I were insane. They remained in the same great misery that

I had just come out of. I realized in that moment that I was having a deep inner experience, not anything visible except for the light that some could see emanating from my body that divine day.

For the rest of that day and night, I was bathed in light and felt love toward everyone and everything. All the things that I had hated the day before were now luminous and beautiful. I spent three hours weeping as I looked at my hand and arm. I was awestruck at the miracle of the body that I lived in. I felt great reverence for the power that lay behind this magnificent creation, even though I now knew that I was that power. I was experiencing the divine union of my body and soul. Nothing has ever come close to the supreme joy of that state. Every person who sat before me was God. And by the end of the weekend, I knew that I would never be the same again.

When I arrived home, my husband was happy to see me and I still had a job on Monday, at least for a while. Each person I interacted with at work felt divine. Looking deeply into their eyes, I felt tremendous compassion for them as they shared their problems with me. I knew then that God knows everything about us and has infinite patience.

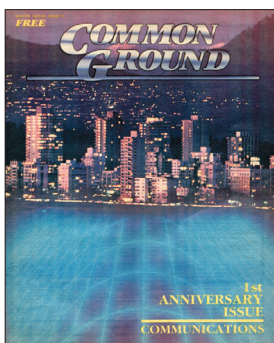
But the most unexpected and shocking change was that I began to menstruate after five years. My doctor was curious and concerned and ordered some tests. A few days later, he called and told me that my uterus was completely whole and perfectly healthy. I knew that a miracle had taken place.

Vancouver-based Devrah Laval is author of The Magic Doorway Into the Divine. She has been a spiritual counselor and has facilitated numerous groups and workshops. (devrahlaval@telus.net) (www.themagicdoorway.com).

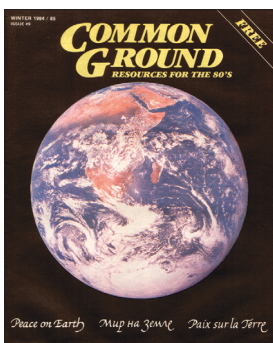




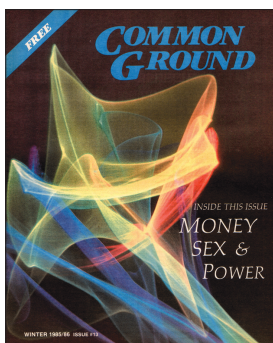
WINTER 1982/'83



WINTER 1983/'84



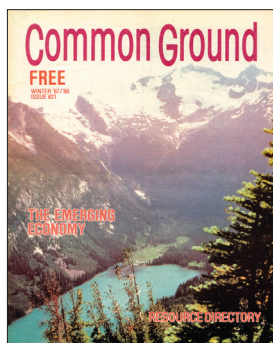
WINTER 1984/'85



WINTER 1985/'86



WINTER 1986/'87



WINTER 1987/'88

25 inspiring years of Common Ground

by Joseph Roberts

25

Prior to 1982 people needed more access to information that was inspiring, independent and life affirming. Mainstream media of the time represented commercial interests even more than today. No large independent newspapers or magazines existed to inspire people in the spirit of the times.

Many of us who grew up during the 1960s and '70s had questioned authority and now wanted more out of life than the prescribed regimen.

The civil rights movement and Vietnam war protests had been successful. People were awakening to just causes and experiencing their personal and collective power when engaged in honourable actions. These grassroots movements morphed to renew the personal growth, peace, anti-nuclear and environmental movements.

Each of these new flowerings of human spirit branched into a dazzling variety of volunteer causes seeking a deeper realization of self and a fuller actualization of social justice. The peace movement matured and sought inward answers to outward problems. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, War Resisters League, Ban the Bomb and other peace groups were being

discovered by a new generation with enthusiasm for the causes. John Lennon and other socially conscious musicians inspired our imagination to give peace a chance. Many groups like Voice of Women, Society Promoting Environmental Conservation, Greenpeace, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility and West Coast Environmental Law Association sprouted.

Music and dance were alive and well. The arts flourished. Grassroots groups were growing. Direct action coupled with public education focused attention to effect positive change.

Much personal and social progress came from this gathering together. Meditation groups grew. Community gardens sprang up. People became informed, got organized and effectively averted disastrous projects such as open pit uranium mining near Clearwater, BC, the dumping of 2,4-D into the Okanagan's Lake Kalamata, and Atomic Energy of Canada asking BC Hydro to go nuclear. Saving wilderness and wildlife came into popular culture. Ecology and conservation won over short-sighted agendas.

In 1976 at the Habitat Forum, thousands heard the compassionate and passionate words of Mother Teresa, Buckminster Fuller, Margaret Mead and Barbara Ward encouraging us to understand that we are global citizens who need to be kind to each other and wisely shepherd our beautiful world.

I was swept up into the vibrant grassroots movement opposing atomic energy and bombs in BC during the '70s, because an elderly woman with white

hair and a big smile asked me to sign a Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility petition demanding a government inquiry into all aspects of nuclear power including uranium mining, milling, reactors, nuclear weapons and atomic waste. Little did I know that six years later I would be dreaming up and organizing Canada's largest peace rally, Vancouver's first Walk for Peace. Nor did I know that Common Ground would be born. Such were those fertile times.

empower this new community. People wanted answers on lifestyle issues including birth, death, food, shelter, relationships, sexuality, religion, shelter, ecology, spirituality, creativity, work, play and transitions. They also wanted to connect with others contemplating these same questions. It was into this renewal that Common Ground was born.

The magazine was black and white on newsprint, 28 pages long, and with only 20,000 copies printed. When we first

In 1976 at the Habitat Forum, thousands heard the compassionate and passionate words of Mother Teresa, Buckminster Fuller, Margaret Mead and Barbara Ward encouraging us to be kind to each other and wisely shepherd our beautiful world.

People were reconsidering all aspects of social transformation. They wanted to find therapists, counsellors, healers, practitioners, workshops, seminars, products and fellow travellers to support their self development and health.

Someone said that freedom of the press is only guaranteed if you own one; so it seemed that starting a fresh new independent publication could help to co-inspire this new era.

Common Ground was conceived as a personal growth resource directory to be published each season. Winter 1982 was our premiere edition.

Common Ground magazine was the first major publication in Canada to

started publishing Common Ground it was a personal resource directory cover to cover. Section categories included the arts, business services, communications, spirituality and many more, with the major backbone being health, healing and bodywork, psychology, therapy and counselling. We declared Common Ground a quarterly resource directory.

The cover quoted Robert Mueller "Networking is a process of making connections with other people," from his book titled Networking: The First Report and Directory. Networking is what we're really about. Our first issue had a picture of the West End photographed by Greg McIntyre through Lost

JAN/FEB 1995



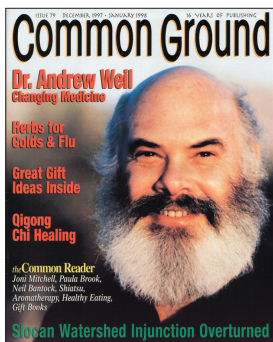
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DEC/JAN '96/'97



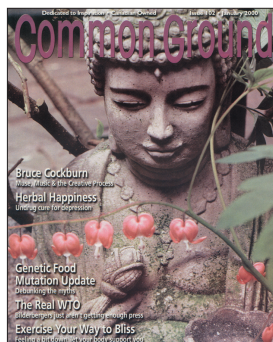
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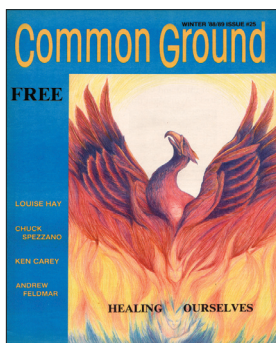


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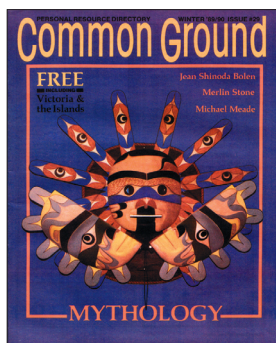


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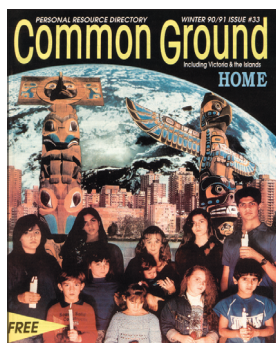




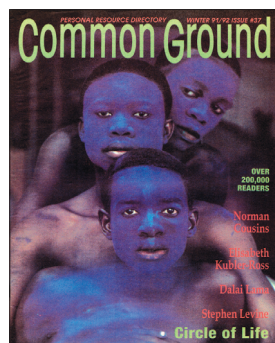
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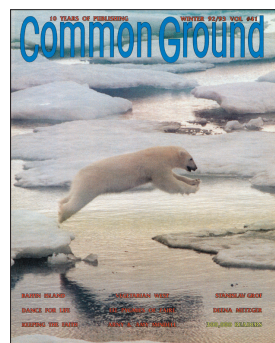
WINTER 1989/'90



WINTER 1990/'91



WINTER 1991/'92



WINTER 1992/'93



JAN/FEB 1994

Lagoon's bulrushes. Greg MacIntyre was a dedicated volunteer, who later in his life was a photographer for Western Canada Wilderness Committee. Unfortunately he died last year.

CG held quarterly networking and distribution parties whenever a new issue of Common Ground came out. We invited all advertisers to come and enjoy food, drink and be merry. And, of course, take copies of the new Common Ground to help kick-start distribution. The rest we did from our cars.

Reading the first edition, I see a lot of people who listed in Common Ground, who are still doing amazing things in our communities today such as Co-op Radio and the Ridge Theatre. In the 1980s I did carpentry work five days a week and Common Ground on nights and weekends. Later I managed to switch to doing Common Ground five days a week and carpentry on the weekend to keep the family cash flow going.

Our first logo and layout of the magazine was done in Alana Mascali's basement with the layout designed by Bob Mercer, who then was also the designer for the Georgia Straight. Typesetting came on strips of photographic paper which needed to be cut and hot waxed onto large blue-lined flats. This was before desktop electronic publishing.

The masthead also read publisher: Alana Mascali, Michael Bertrand, Joseph Roberts, camera work: Unitype, layout: Jane Kane, Ricki Bertrand, back cover: Alana Mascali, typesetting: Guru Raj Kaur Khalsa, printing: College Printers. Probably these details are mostly interesting to the pioneers.

We invite all the people who listed in the first year of Common Ground to contact us. You know who you are.

My first issue is singed around the outside edges because it survived the fire when our office burned down.

Most of the people listing in the first issue were friends or organizations that we supported. In the energy and environment section we had Greenpeace, SPEC, West Coast Environmental Law and Western Canada Wilderness Committee, to mention a few. There was always space in the magazine which we filled with empowering quotes. One such quote in the first edition may have been prophetic. "A diamond is a piece of coal that stuck with it." Well, Common Ground stuck with it and that piece of

Little did I know that six years later I would be dreaming up and organizing Canada's largest peace rally, Vancouver's first Walk for Peace. Nor did I know that Common Ground would be born.

coal became a diamond.

In the education section was Dominion Herbal College, Kirpal Ashram School, UBC Centre for Continuing Education and the Waldorf School. The crafts section listed Oh Brother's store on West 41, and my brother David advertised wood carving while living on Hornby Island. There are so many memories. In the food section we have Canadian Health Food Association, Country Health, CRS Worker's Co-op which started Uprising Bakery, Folklore Herbs, Good Morning Dairy, Isadora's and Theodora's cooperative restaurants started by the founders of Ideal Mini-school, Shin Mei Do Miso from Denman Island, Lifestream, The Naam, Wild West Organic Harvest, Patels,

Sweet Cheribum, City Farmer, so many wonderful places. There was a global and social change section listing Oxfam, Seva, CCNR and announcing a Daniel Ellsberg talk at UBC.

The largest section, health, healing and bodywork, listed so many still involved in massage, aromatherapy and reflexology. Organizations such as Coalition for Alternative Therapies which became the Health Action Network. Practitioners such as Henry Dorst, Yvette Eastman, Chris Shirley of the Vancouver Reflexology Centre, I have to say to both Yvette and Chris, "Thank you. You've been in every single issue

workshops for \$35 to \$50 per person, meals and housing included. That was 1982. The Sufi Order, 3HO Foundation's kundalini yoga, Friends of Findhorn. There are so many wonderful people, places and practices listed. Then there was a section called tools for living which included Banyen Books, Black Swan Records, Camel Dance, The Comic Shop, Futon to Sleep On, Jay's Exotic Kaya Kaya, Les Bonquieur – a French bookshop, Mido Framers, Phoenix Metaphysical, Spartacus Books. Another section titled women's organizations and services listed South Surrey White Rock Women's Place, the Midwives Association of British Columbia. The MABC educated for the legalization of midwifery in British Columbia.

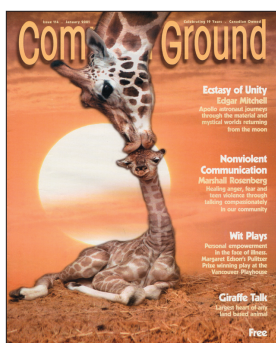
And then the catch-all section et cetera which advertised one of the best parties we ever had for Common Ground at a place called Studio Acoustics on West 10th near UBC. They had for their logo the black cat from restricted saying "completely concerned with music".

Send us your most inspiring Common Ground stories.

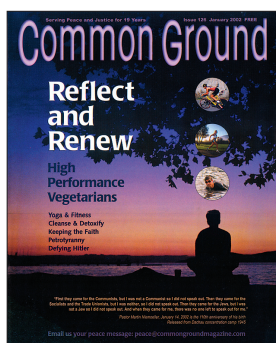
There are too many memories for just one issue of the magazine. We invite you to write us with your favourite Common Ground experiences, so we can tell your stories throughout our 25th year.

We are now at a new point of illumination and awakening. This January 2007 edition is dedicated to you. CG will be sponsoring 25 events this year in appreciation of our great community of dedicated and compassionate people. Thank you for making Common Ground a success. Be with us for the next 25 years, the best is yet to come!

JAN 2001



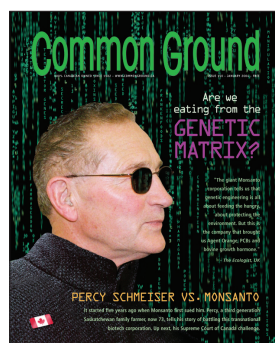
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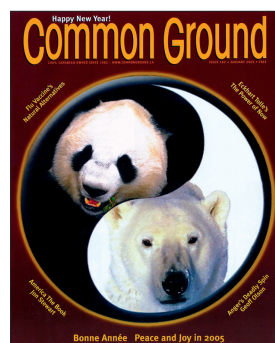
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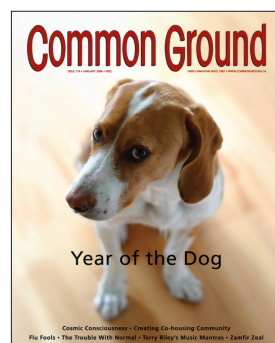
JAN 2004



JAN 2005



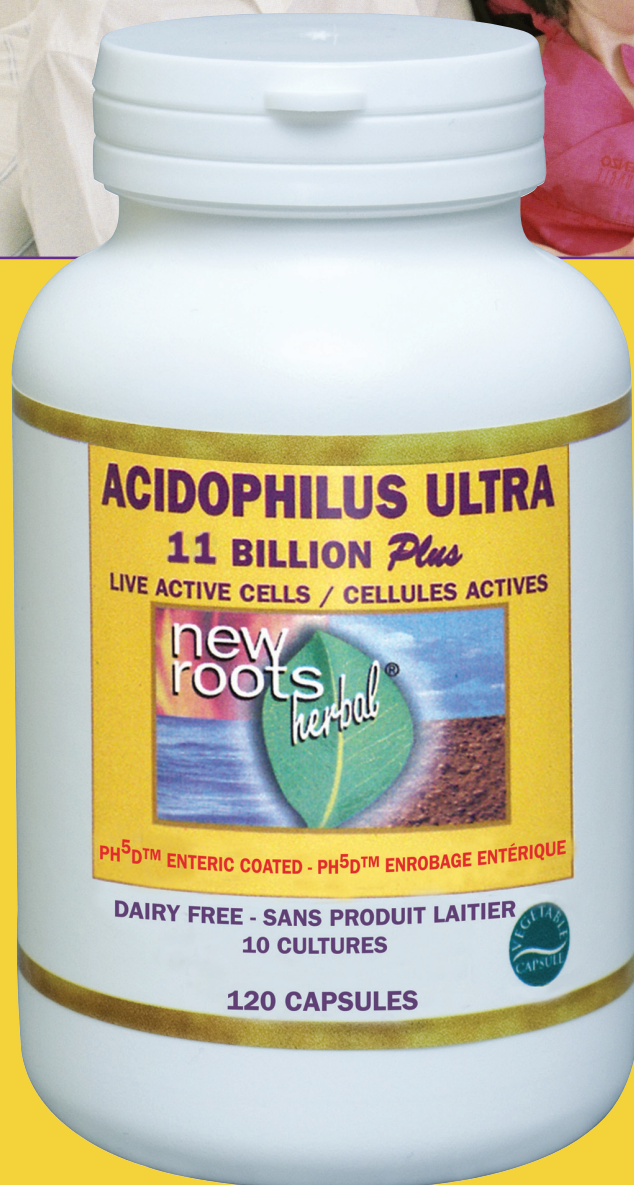
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Killing off the cure Diabetes Industrial Complex

HEALTH

DRUG BUST *Alan Cassels*

Here's a quick question for health watchers out there: Which health-related word is becoming rarer and rarer now, passé even? "Leeches?" Nope. "Blood letting?" Wrong. Give up? It's the word "cure."

We hear a lot about prevention, diagnosis and treatment. There are no end of stories about causes, links, associations, disease markers and genetic predispositions. These terms litter the health sections of our newspapers and fill our TV news broadcasts. No one seems to be talking about cures these days.

Why is that? Well, there are many perspectives on this, but let me give you just one: "Cures" are unprofitable. No one makes money on cures. If the

words of Milton Friedman, a single moral imperative: "To maximize shareholder value." Companies exist to make money. Full stop.

A biotech analyst at a St. Louis brokerage firm really captured this perspective in saying, "We sometimes joke that when you're doing a clinical trial, there are two possible disasters. The first disaster is if you kill people. The second disaster is if you cure them. The truly good drugs are the ones you can use chronically for a long, long time."

Let's face it, long-term diseases – ones which sometimes mean a near-lifetime dependence on drugs, devices, medical interventions and treatments of all sorts – are among the most profitable

The real "preventions" and "cures" for type II diabetes revolve around two things: better nutrition and more physical exercise.

Some might even go so far as to say that remarkable, simple cures for type II diabetes currently exist, yet they are not being tested, promoted or used. A recent study of dietary interventions compared a vegan diet to one recommended by the American Diabetes Association. It found that 43 percent of those on the vegan diet reduced their need for drugs to manage their diabetes, compared with 26 percent of the ADA diet group. OK, not stellar, but it helps about two in five patients. In terms of lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, and causing people to lose

weight, you will not find a drug on the planet that would even come close to achieving a benefit equal to this vegan diet. None.

Dr. Neal Barnard, the researcher who ran this study, brims with enthusiasm when he describes in a phone interview that the only side effects are good ones: "They [the patients] lose weight. Their clothes don't fit anymore." Barnard is an adjunct associate professor of medicine at George Washington University, and president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (www.pcrn.org), a group which promotes preventive medicine.

continued on p.10

Cures are unprofitable. No one makes money on cures... A cure for any of the big, chronic diseases of our time – asthma, heart disease, arthritis – would have a significant, negative impact on the stock market and in turn, the economy. It would cost jobs. It would affect our competitiveness. We couldn't have it.

business of healthcare is about bringing better financial returns to investors, we would do best to stamp out and eliminate cures once and for all. A cure for any of the big, chronic diseases of our time – asthma, heart disease, arthritis – would have a significant, negative impact on the stock market and in turn, the economy. It would cost jobs. It would affect our competitiveness. We couldn't have it.

You'll never hear health care industry executives say outright that cures are anathema to their growth projections, but if you look closer, you'll find, as I have, all kinds of very strong evidence that possible "cures" are being denied, discredited and otherwise undermined. Like inflation, or low unemployment, cures are just bad for business.

You might argue that the employees of companies making health care products – drugs and medical devices, for example – are driven by a higher calling, a very strong sense of social responsibility. The people I know who work for pharmaceutical companies are truly animated by the sense of contributing to the greater good of humankind. And that's a good thing. At the same time, I know that it hardly matters whether your product is a computer, a car or a coronary valve. The corporation, the overwhelmingly dominant entity in our society, takes its marching orders from, in

revenue sources on the planet. To me, type II diabetes, also known as "adult onset diabetes" is the quintessential disease that engenders lifelong dependency. More than many diseases, it illustrates the corporate model of modern sickness care that is keen on having you take products over and over and over again. Your "high" blood sugar, or glucose, a condition called hyperglycemia can lead to many long-term health problems, such as eye, kidney and nerve damage. The opposite of this, hypoglycemia, is also bad news, and happens when blood sugar levels drop too low, impairing mental functioning and sometimes causing you to lose consciousness.

Taken together, hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia can be largely, but not always, regulated by controlling two things: energy expenditure (physical energy) and food intake, which happens more often in those who are overweight and who have a lowered response to insulin in the tissues of the body (insulin resistance). There are a number of known ways to improve your body's use of insulin, but the goal of the "Diabetes Industrial Complex" involves three key things: Getting you tested (how "high" is your blood glucose?), getting you to monitor and test your blood glucose with blood test strips several times a day and getting you to take treatment (drugs and insulin).

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Killing off the cure cont. from p. 9

He sums things up with: "I hope this study will rekindle interest in using diet changes first, rather than prescription drugs." So confident is he in the dietary cure for diabetes, he's written a book entitled *Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes: The Scientifically Proven System for Reversing Diabetes Without Drugs*. (Rodale, 2007).

While it might seem that getting people onto a vegan diet could be rather difficult, the dietary means to control diabetes seem almost "cure-like." You can be sure the Diabetes Industrial Complex won't like it. In fact, Dr. Barnard, and physicians like him, who propose diet and exercise to defeat diabetes, are Davids against a Goliath of mammoth proportions.

At the 19th World Diabetes Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, last month, the International Diabetes Federation

In the hullabaloo at the World Diabetes Congress, the IDF announced a \$10 million research grant from Eli Lilly, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, and whose key products centre on treating diabetes. That grant, designed to "... close the gap between scientific knowledge and patient care" on diabetes stipulates that it can't be used for pharmaceutical research. But, I ask, can it be used to make sure the anti-commercial word "cure" doesn't raise any embarrassing questions around the International Diabetes Federation?

Can we even take the IDF seriously when it comes to talking about anything that affects the financial interests of the diabetes business?

Diabetes has been described as a growing health problem in our society, an epidemic that will financially burden our health care system. But I see the issues around our blood glucose to be largely social, rather than medical.

If we are fat, malnourished and sedentary high blood-pressure-cholesterol-glucose slobs, is it because we are sick or that we live in a sick society? Have we engineered the nutrients out of our food and the need for physical energy out of our lives?

announced that "...an estimated 246 million people in the world have diabetes" and that type II diabetes (about 90 percent of diabetics) afflicts almost six percent of the world's adult population.

In the words of IDF president-elect Martin Silink, "The diabetes time bomb has been ticking for 50 years and it's getting louder." With a market set to expand within 20 years to affect roughly 380 million people, you can imagine the diabetes industry – the makers of drugs, monitoring devices and blood test strips – are salivating at the size and scope of this market. Any cure for this chronic disease would bring their empire to a sudden and tragic end.

What is the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), anyway? Its web material (www.idf.org) says that it is a "... global advocate for more than 240 million people with diabetes worldwide," representing, apparently, "... over 190 diabetes associations in more than 150 countries." Its mission is to "... promote diabetes care, prevention and a cure worldwide." Wonderful. There's that elusive word "cure" again.

But do the people at IDF mean it? It's a little hard to take them seriously when you see their activities are largely funded by the very same device and drug manufacturers who stand to make a lot of money by discrediting people like Dr. Barnard and his vegan diet.

If you're like me, you're likely to see a continued, corrupting influence of all the money in diabetes propaganda.

If we are fat, malnourished and sedentary high blood-pressure-cholesterol-glucose slobs, is it because we are sick or that we live in a sick society? Have we engineered the nutrients out of our food and the need for physical energy out of our lives?

My resolution for this year is to devote 2007 to diving into this, the most heavily marketed disease of the century – type II diabetes – and examine the myriad ways in which the Diabetes Industrial Complex is making your high blood sugar the hottest disease on the planet. Don't worry, I promise it won't be boring; there is enough intrigue, scandal and medical malfeasance to fill a whole book.

Do you have a type II diabetes story to tell? Have you any experience with treating it or "curing" it in yourself or someone close to you? Share your stories with me and if there is any evidence you think I should see, send it along to (cassels@shaw.ca).

Alan Cassels is co-author of Selling Sickness and a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. He is also the founder of Media Doctor Canada (www.mediadoctor.ca), which evaluates reporting of medical treatments in Canada's media.

Flawed Danish cell phone study perfectly timed for holiday marketing

by Dr. George Carlo

HEALTH

The December issue of Common Ground featured an article highlighting the invisible hazards of cell phones. Recently, a controversial Danish study alleged that mobile/wireless phones were safe. This well-timed study is suspicious for many reasons, not the least of which that it was funded by the cell phone industry.

After a number of prominent, peer-reviewed studies indicating that cell phone radiation can cause genetic damage, brain and blood cell dysfunction and a host of health problems, including cancer, now comes a Danish study that appears to say there is no danger at all. And that is exactly what cell phone users want to hear, if it is true.

The problem is that the new, Danish cohort study is a ruse based upon a program initiated by the telecommunications industry more than a decade ago to control the global, scientific research agenda concerning cell phones and health effects. The industry strategy has been to fund low-risk studies that will assure a positive result, and then use it to convince the news media and the public that it is proof that cell phones are safe. Even though the science proved nothing

of the sort. It is against this backdrop that the Danish study provides an illustrative case history.

This study, published in the [US] Journal of the National Cancer Institute and funded by the industry, used a methodology that gave it little chance to find any increase in the risk of cancer among cell phone users. A cell phone user was defined as someone who made only one call per week over a period of six months or more. Finding a cell phone-

where their tumours were located, were not culled and studied, thus, an opportunity to learn something important about brain cancer risk was missed. Because the investigators had access to subscriber information obtained from the phone companies, it is reasonable to assume that, that type of in-depth study could have been completed if the investigators so desired.

International cancer statistics show that Denmark is among the top 15

Finding a cell phone-related cancer risk among this group would be akin to identifying excess lung cancer risk among people who smoked one cigarette a week, similar to finding a needle in a haystack.

related cancer risk among this group would be akin to identifying excessive lung cancer risk among people who smoked one cigarette a week; similar to finding a needle in a haystack.

The study was designed to produce a pre-ordained outcome. It covered phones used from 1982 through 1995, ancient technology that bears little resemblance to the phones in use today. Furthermore, all 420,000 people were assumed to use the cell phone exactly the same way. People who used their phones on the same side of the head,

countries in the world for cancer deaths among both men and women. This study shows that Danes have a low cancer risk, a hypothesis that does not hold up, and which also suggests that something is wrong within the study's data. Thus, the analytical algorithm, or the method used by the investigators for calculation, was somehow altered or flawed.

In 1993, I ran a \$28.5 million research effort, funded by the industry and overseen by the US government. When studies indicated that cell phone radiation caused biological changes, the

industry sought to close down the program. Completed in 2000, this program remains the largest-ever addressing the issue of cell phones and cancer.

Back in the '90s, two authors of the 2006 Danish study applied to our program for funding to do this study. When they made the proposal on behalf of their company, the International Epidemiology Institute, both were employees of the [US] National Cancer Institute.

After consideration of their proposal, we denied them funding because we were not convinced they would provide meaningful findings. When we refused them funding, they went directly to the industry with the same pitch and they were hired.

The American Cancer Society is also on the support bandwagon for the Danish study. In 2002, scientists from the ACS testified on behalf of the cell phone industry in brain cancer litigation. The case was brought forward in federal court in Baltimore, Maryland by surgeon Christopher Newman, who had claimed that his terminal brain tumour was the result of his cell phone use.

The ACS testified that the tumour had not been caused by his cell phone. Within a year of that testimony, a report was released by the ACS that included cell phones as one of that year's greatest cancer myths. The subsequent connection between the ACS and the cell phone industry was arrogantly blatant.

The Danish study has been trumpeted far beyond any reasonable reading of the data as proof that cell phones are safe. This is a disservice to consumers who want to believe that scientists and doctors can be trusted to be honest with data, and to keep them safe. The Danish registry remains a valuable resource, but we are still awaiting a proper epidemiological study that will be able to use that resource to help tell the world what it needs to know.

In many cases, industry-funded studies now produce industry-desired outcomes. But tampering with the integrity of scientists, scientific systems and public information steps over the lines of propriety that are appropriate for protecting business interests, especially when the casualty of the interference is the public's health and safety.

Adapted from The Latest Reassurance Ruse About Cell Phones and Cancer by Dr. George L. Carlo, with contributions from Jill Ungar, Milt Bowling and Martin Schram. See the entire article at Dr. Carlo Reviews the Danish Cohort Study under Safe Wireless Alerts (www.safewireless.org).



WHAT REALLY
FINISHED OFF THE
PEOPLE OF EASTER ISLAND...

by John Robbins

h ealthy at 100

Happiness as important as diet and lifestyle

An ever-increasing body of medical research is coming to the definite conclusion that the quality of your relationships with other people may be the single most important determinant of your health and longevity.

A few years ago, I received a letter from a woman in southern California. She wrote that she

husband had held the misguided belief that their diet and lifestyle could guarantee them everlasting health. There is something innocent and childlike about believing that if you eat only healthful foods and exercise enough, you will never become ill.

There is a part of all of us that would like to be able to follow some magic rule or obey some infallible authority

There is something innocent and childlike about believing that if you eat only healthful foods and exercise enough, you will never become ill. There is a part of all of us that would like to be able to follow some magic rule or obey some infallible authority and thereby be guaranteed freedom from all suffering.

and her husband had for many years avidly followed a path of health. Their lifestyle, she believed, had been exemplary. They had practised yoga and meditated and neither of them had let a single bite of anything containing refined sugar pass their lips. They exercised regularly and never took any drugs, not even so much as an aspirin. They had been very happy together, she said, and had believed that by eating healthful foods and undertaking other sound health practices they would never fall ill.

But now she felt bitter, angry and cheated. In his fifties, her husband had developed cancer and died. What was the point, she lamented, of all their health diligence when this could still happen? Despondent and feeling betrayed, she had given up any semblance of health discipline and was stuffing herself with hamburgers, candy and the other unwholesome foods she had forgone for years. She no longer exercised and had gained more than 70 pounds in the three years since her husband's death. She had developed diabetes and was overwhelmingly depressed.

Reading this woman's letter, I felt sorrow. I felt sad for her loss of her husband, and sad for how depressed, despondent and bitter she had become. And I felt sad, too, that she and her

and thereby be guaranteed freedom from all suffering. But life just doesn't work that way. Life is far more unpredictable and far more mysterious.

I've known raw food aficionados who believe that all cooked food is unhealthful and who, when they become ill, blame it on the one piece of cooked food they've recently eaten. I've known zealous Atkins adherents who demonize carbs and then agonize because in a lapse of willpower they ate a baked potato. I've known people who believe that if they eat only pure food and take thousands of dollars worth of supplements, they will live indefinitely.

A good diet and exercise regimen is important and living healthfully can make a tremendous difference. But there are many other factors in our lives that also have great influence over our health. Someone may die of a skin cancer at age 50 that began as the result of a teenage sunburn. Some cancers, particularly breast, uterine, ovaria, and prostate cancers start in the womb, engendered in part by the food our mothers ate and the chemicals in their environments.

We live in a world that is becoming increasingly toxic and polluted. There are many environmental exposures over which we have no control. Some diseases occur whose origins are com-

plete mysteries, descending on people seemingly out of the blue, no matter what their lifestyle. Others develop that are intimately linked to social factors such as poverty and dangerous working conditions. There are powerful forces in our world that are undermining relationships, forcing people to work insane hours and poisoning our air and water.

Because the food we eat is one factor that we can often control, we sometimes attribute to it a degree of importance that is inconsistent with reality. Doing so can give us the illusion that we are completely in charge. We may feel that nothing bad can happen to us as long as we adhere with sufficient stringency to the dietary regimen in which we have invested such magical powers. The trouble is that even people with perfect diets sometimes get cancer. Horrible things can, and often do, happen to people who do not deserve them.

The woman who wrote to me had believed that her and her husband's lifestyle would guarantee them long lives without illness. When this belief was so

painfully punctured, she was left bereft and unable to cope. Hers is a very sad story, and I tell it here not to embarrass her or find fault with her in any way, but in the hope that others might learn something from her experience.

I wrote back to her that I was sorry to learn of her loss and how much suffering she had experienced. I spoke to her of the pain and disillusionment I've known in my own life, when ideals and dreams I had believed in came crashing down around me, and of the life I had found on the other side of disillusionment and despair.

Later in the letter, I said I hoped that in time she would be able to see that it is possible to make healthy choices, not in the belief that by doing so she would never be ill or die, but because she knows that suffering occurs in every human life, and she wants to prevent as much illness as she can and alleviate as much suffering as she is able. It is possible to take responsibility for your health and life, I wrote, not to avoid everything painful in the human experience, but to



"Woody" Brown, 83. Photo by Etta Clark from Growing Old Is Not for Sissies II, Pomegranate Artbooks

lessen suffering and to enrich and illumine who you are with wisdom and love. I wrote that her letter reminded me of something I once heard from a wise man: "If you go forward, you will die. If you go backward, you will die. It is better to go forward."

The point of going forward, of working to make your life a positive expression of your highest vision, is not to avoid all suffering and death, for that is not within the realm of human possibility. The point, rather, is to meet all of your life experiences, including the most difficult ones, with the greatest powers of love and healing within you. The gift of going forward is not that you will never physically decline or fall ill, but that you will be less likely to do so prematurely and be better able to enter wholly into your life and meet whatever the world brings you with grace and wisdom.

If you eat natural foods, jog or meditate because you feel better when you do, because you feel closer to yourself and more alive, then even if you should die younger than you might wish, you

We have so much to learn from the old. There was a cartoon in the *New Yorker* entitled *Yuppie Angst*. A man is saying, "Oh no, I spilled cappuccino on my down jacket." Elders, who have seen their families and friends die, who have seen generations of children being born, can have a deeper understanding of tragedy. Closer to death, they are much more in touch with the cycles of life. They understand what makes a life worth living. They know there is little point in having low cholesterol and rock hard abs if you don't love your life.

There is a story about a mother who asked a little girl to offer grace at breakfast. Agreeing to do so, the little girl began, "We thank you, dear God, for this beautiful day."

"Bless you, my dear," said her mother, "for offering the prayer, but apparently you didn't look outdoors before you prayed. It's raining and it's a dismal day."

"Mother," responded the little girl. "Never judge a day by its weather." The little girl understood how important it is to bring our love to all our moods and

Elders... are much more in touch with the cycles of life. They understand what makes a life worth living. They know there is little point in having low cholesterol and rock hard abs if you don't love your life.

will not regret having cared for yourself. If you experience a particular diet or lifestyle as a point of entry into greater presence and well-being, then whatever happens, you'll be grateful for your choices. If lifting weights or doing yoga or aerobic exercise provides you with more access to yourself, if it brings you balance and strength, if it helps you listen to your body, then even if serious illness occurs, you'll be glad you've done everything you could on behalf of your wellness, and thankful for the life you've lived.

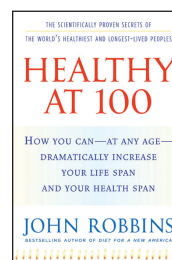
A healthful diet and lifestyle almost always lead to a longer and healthier life. They provide increased vitality, improved resistance to disease and a greater sense of wholeness and freedom. But even the finest exercise and diet plan cannot forever overcome the inevitability of aging. Eventually, even the best-cared-for bodies begin to weaken and no longer function as they did once.

In our appearance-oriented society, aging can seem like a misfortune. But in the process of aging, people often come to understandings that are crucial to the completion and fulfillment of their lives. They learn something about loss and acceptance. They may have to cope with enormous difficulties – a husband dying, a wife getting cancer, even the death of a child. They come to know how vulnerable everyone is. They understand there are no easy answers, and that life is hard at times for everyone.

experiences. This means finding the beauty and giving thanks for the opportunities in every phase of our lives. This is not always easy, but it is of immense significance.

We are all vulnerable and naked before the mysteries of life. Sometimes when we look deeply and honestly at our woundedness, we discover our power, our joy and our will to live. We realize that we can accept imperfections, and that our lives don't have to be perfect to be precious.

A human life has its seasons, much as the Earth has seasons, and each one has its own particular beauty and possibilities. When we ask life to remain perpetually spring, we turn the natural process of life into a process of loss rather than a process of celebration and appreciation.



Excerpted from Healthy at 100 by John Robbins, copyright 2006. Reprinted by arrangement with Random House Publishing Group. John Robbins is the author of Diet for a New America, The Food Revolution and Reclaiming Our Health, and founder of EarthSave International, a non-profit organization dedicated to healthy food choices, preservation of the environment and a more compassionate world. (www.healthyat100.org)

Things become beautiful when you love them

There are those who when they look in the mirror and see signs of aging – a new grey hair, a new wrinkle or blemish – rush to cover it up with some cream, ointment or dye. There's nothing wrong with wanting to look your best, but if you are at war with the aging process, you are going to lose. Those who try to pretend that they aren't aging will find themselves in an impossible race with death. As Morrie Schwartz said, "If you're always battling against getting older, you're always going to be unhappy, because it will happen anyway."

Some years ago, an advertising executive working for a large beauty products company had a bright idea. In its ads, the company began asking people to send in photographs along with brief letters about the most beautiful women they knew. Within a short time, the company had received more than a thousand photos and letters.

One particular letter caught the attention of the employee whose job it was to open and sort them, and eventually the letter made its way to the company president. It was filled with spelling and punctuation errors and was written by a young boy living in a very rough neighbourhood. He wrote of a beautiful woman who lived down the street.

"I visit her every day," he wrote. "And she makes me feel like the most important kid in the world. We play checkers and she listens to my problems and gives me apples. She understands me. When I leave, she always yells out the door, for the whole world to hear, that she's proud of me."

The boy ended his letter by saying, "I don't know if you can tell by this picture, but she is the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. I hope I someday have a wife as pretty as her."

Curious, the company president asked to see the photograph that had accompanied the letter. His secretary handed it to him. It showed a smiling woman whose sparse grey hair was pulled back in a bun. She was well along in years, her face bore many wrinkles and she was sitting in a wheelchair. Yet her eyes were luminous with kindness and joy.

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SPRITUALITY

When you are on a journey, it is certainly helpful to know where you are going or, at least, the general direction in which you are moving. But don't forget that the only thing ultimately real about your journey is the step you are taking at this moment. That's all there ever is.

Your life's journey has an outer purpose and an inner purpose. The outer purpose is to arrive at your goal or destination, to accomplish what you set out to do, to achieve this or that, which, of course, implies future. However, if your destination, or the steps you are going to take in the future, take up so much of your attention that they become more

totally succeed in your inner purpose, or the other way around, which is actually more common: outer riches and inner poverty, or, as Jesus put it, "... gain the world and lose your soul."

Ultimately, of course, every outer purpose is doomed to "fail" sooner or later, simply because it is subject to the law of the impermanence of all things. The sooner you realize that your outer purpose cannot give you lasting fulfillment, the better. When you have seen the limitations of your outer purpose, you give up your unrealistic expectation that

If you delve into the past, it will become a bottomless pit. There is always more. You may think that you need more time to understand the past or to become free of it. This is a delusion. Only the present can free you of the past. More time cannot free you of time.

important to you than the step you are taking now, you completely miss the journey's inner purpose, which has nothing to do with where you are going or what you are doing, but everything to do with how.

It has nothing to do with future and everything to do with the quality of your consciousness at this moment. The outer purpose belongs to the horizontal dimension of space and time. The inner purpose concerns a deepening of your Being in the vertical dimension of the timeless Now. Your outer journey may contain a million steps. Your inner journey has only one: the step you are taking right now.

As you become more deeply aware of this one step, you realize that it already contains all the other steps, as well as the destination, within itself. This one step becomes transformed into an expression of perfection, an act of great beauty and quality. It takes you into Being and the light of Being shines through it. This is both the purpose and the fulfillment of your inner journey, the journey into yourself.

Does it matter whether or not we achieve our outer purpose, or if we succeed or fail in the world? It will matter to you as long as you haven't realized your inner purpose. After that, the outer purpose is just a game you may continue to play simply because you enjoy it. It is also possible to fail completely in your outer purpose and, at the same time,

it should make you happy and you make it subservient to your inner purpose.

There is no need to investigate your unconscious past, except as it manifests at this moment as a thought, an emotion, a desire, a reaction or an external event. Whatever you need to know about the unconscious past within yourself will be revealed by the challenges of the present.

If you delve into the past, it will become a bottomless pit. There is always more. You may think that you need more time to understand the past or to become free of it. This is a delusion. Only the present can free you of the past. More time cannot free you of time. Access the power of Now. That is the key.

What is the power of Now? None other than the power of your presence, your consciousness liberated from thought forms. So deal with the past on the level of the present. The more attention you give to the past, the more you energize it, and the more likely you are to make a "self" out of it.

Don't misunderstand; attention is essential, but not to the past as past. You cannot find yourself by going into the past. You find yourself by coming into the present.

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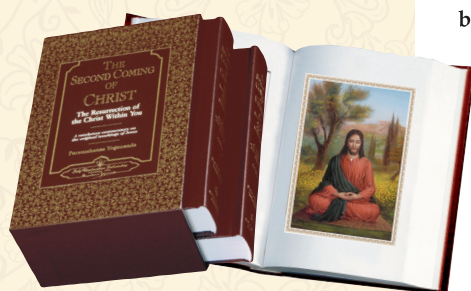
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I did not You did so

UNIVERSE WITHIN Gwen Randall-Young

*In the art of peace, we never attack.
An attack is proof that one is out of control.*
– Morihei Ueshiba, *Art of Peace*

While it would seem that conflict is an inherent part of life – conflicts may occur between parents and children, within intimate relationships or in the workplace – I would be more inclined to say that differences between individuals are a natural part of life and that conflict is a result of the way we perceive and react to those differences.

Ego perceives difference as a threat, feeling the need to be right, to defend itself or take control. Ego thinks that if you are not with me, you must be against me. Ego is manifest in the little child who elbows his way to the front of the line, the one who refuses to let another child play because she is different, the one who is slighted if someone else is chosen and the sibling who tries to make the other look bad so she can be the good one.

Unfortunately, we unconsciously carry many of these childhood ego characteristics into adulthood. It is no wonder that when we see conflicts in the world they often resemble our childhood squabbles; politicians and world leaders resort to name-calling and put-downs, fight for control of resources and argue over geographical boundaries.

I recall, as a child, the boy next door telling everyone, "Get off my property!" Sometimes, we drew lines in the sand-box designating each child's play space. It was much more fun, however, when we all collaborated, working together to build the same thing. We shared our ideas and talents, creating something far better than any of us could have done on our own. We knew instinctively that when we chose separateness and self-interest, something was lost.

When we find ourselves arguing with a spouse, it may remind us of our youthful "I did not/You did so" battles with siblings or friends. Somehow, being right and making the other wrong becomes more important than resolving the issue and getting back to having fun.

This is a clear indication that ego has

moved in and is running the show.

Attack, blame, criticism and judgment are also major ego strategies. Ego is always about protecting and elevating itself, while attacking or devaluing the other. Ego seems to think life is an equation, and if the other side gets more or "wins," then ego gets less or "loses." By its very nature, it is impossible for ego to transcend the sense of separateness.

If we find ourselves attacking another, we must remember that this says more about us than the person we are attacking. When we go on the attack, no matter how justified we may feel in choosing a violent response, we are verbally battering another human soul. Surely this is indicative of being out of control.

The peaceful warrior, or the one skilled in the art of peace, is able to stay calm, centred and in a place of integrity, dealing with the issue, rather than the person. He/she knows that power resides in one's own spirit and cannot be threatened. Nor does it have to be proven.

When we come from this stance, we take self out of the equation. It ceases to be about the "I" and becomes about the "We." Even if we are being attacked, and the other is totally into separateness and polarity, our challenge is to stand firmly in our integrity.

Practising the art of peace means we do not allow the behaviour of others to pull us back into ego. We take full responsibility for our responses, never blaming another for our own bad behaviour.

When we are conflicted in our external dealings, we become conflicted within our own body/mind. When we deal with the external world peacefully, we experience peace within our own being.

As we take care in our outer world, we are also taking care of ourselves.

Gwen Randall-Young is a psycho-therapist in private practice and the author of *Growing Into Soul: the Next Step in Human Evolution*. For articles and information about her books and CDs, visit (www.gwen.ca). See display ad this issue on page 19.



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Just a thought

Let's make peace our religion
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Bibek Bhandari, Nepal

Illuminations

Expressions of the personal spiritual experience

Recently, Common Ground attended a book launch and interfaith peace dialogue at the Vancouver Public Library co-hosted by Banyen Books and Mark Tompkins, one of the editors of Illuminations. The book is a compilation of interviews and contributions, representing a diverse range of cultures, traditions and faiths, including a collection of art and photos. The event featured speakers from myriad faiths with the aim of promoting empathy for people of different spiritual paths, inspiring Common Ground to offer these moving excerpts in our first issue of the New Year.

If I claim

Michael Hooven

If I claim to be a man of God, let me dwell on that which is good and noble in all people. And if one man raises his hand to strike the other, let God show them a greater tolerance as I step between them. But you say to me, what of this wicked doer or that wicked doer? Let me proclaim my righteousness in God by refusing to hate another simply because I was told to. Let me forgive them and set myself free because hate can only be learned. And if you ask where hate comes from, I say only from the past. And if you say that hate separates, I say that separation hates.

I can seek to celebrate the diversity in all of nature, and all of humanity. I can seek to celebrate the diversity in all cultures and in all ways of believing. I can remember words like cohabitation and cooperation and cocreation. I can remember that the sun shines equally on all people. I can remember that the fig tree shares its fruit with all people, regardless of their history, place of origin, or destination. I can observe springtime as a never-ending wave of new growth sweeping around the planet. I can observe winter as the necessary preparation for the new growth to follow.

The river

Patricia Hill

The soul has found its body – and puzzles out the confluence of ligament and bone, the lattice of possibility and intent. Move the hand, so, and ponder the mind behind it. Like water leaving its high mountain, the body rushes to its own salt sea in endless conversation with itself.

Where is the soul in all this? Is it the white birch leaning dangerously over the gorge, tenacious and beautiful? Is it the white birch fallen, caught, and rushing under the watchful presence of rock and sky? To stand apart and see oneself drowned, to drown and see oneself standing apart, can the soul do all this? Leave it. You cannot dissect the river, no matter how much you want to know.





The luminous sand beneath your feet will not tell you. The flat rock will not tell you. Neither will the sequined trout, the flies jigging at the water's skin, filament of spider flung at your face. For all the noise and congregation here, you are left as dumb as you ever were. The river proceeds without you, without the part of you ankle-deep in mud, mouth agape, eye squinting from too much light.

A struggle for faith and freedom

Z. Foo, South Africa

How do we know that what we know *is* true? For me this question is a lifelong search. I was born and raised Muslim in South Africa during apartheid. The government determined what we would believe, what our values would be, how we would live, what questions to ask and what answers to receive.

My soul yearned for freedom, longed to feel its essence. If you had asked me what a Muslim was, I would have answered that it is one who prays, gives alms, believes in one god, and fasts. But a religion cannot be classified according to its constitution nor a believer identi-

fied through her practices. Faith for me is about what the heart feels, not what the mind says or the body does. So the suffocating restrictions of the state made me long for an inner freedom, a more loving authority, a just way of life, and a peace that transcends human limitations.

Is this world capable of giving peace? How can love and comfort be found in nature or human relationships that are finite? Or is it possible only in another world, a spiritual world that transcends time, space and earthly restrictions? Can peace be attained only when one has a connection to a higher being? Is prayer the means of achieving this communion? Connection with god is when I feel god's presence in everything I do, when I know that he is with me, watching me every minute of every day. Peace with god, for me, is when I please him, worship him, obey his commandments and live for him, because it is due to him that I am alive.

It is not an easy process, nor is it complete. Every moment we make decisions that either take us closer to god or farther from him.

The moment of knowing

Marie S. Abaya

Up until that point, I did not believe, spent thirty-five years on earth, estranged from living. I often felt dismayed that this was my body, this was my life, and I had to move it.

My name, Abaya, represents the Hindu mudra, palm up facing out, "fearlessness." I loved that confirmation to continue without fear in this life that was not mine.

I found something one day. The alternate meaning of that mudra: Renunciation. Pema Chodron often spoke of it. But now it was mine. My responsibility. Why wasn't it there before? I was holding myself back, resisting life. I had to renounce that disbelief.

The early morning air was sharp as always, but a mist like fog gently draped

over the Douglas-fir hillsides laced with young aspen stands. I had never been this route and relished the mountain scenery with an air of melancholy. I thought of the night before, at the brewpub, saying good-byes. I felt a tightening in my chest, a sadness of leaving, bringing a flow of blurry tears. The early fall sun was breaking through the cold mist in a scattering across the mountains to the west. Then I looked at the pain clearly, and saw it was the pain of being connected, of living and loving. Not the pain I was so familiar with. I was not alone on this earth anymore, in this madness, with this beauty. The pain turned to joy as I physically felt the tightness lift and my heart open and fill my chest with golden warmth. I felt it, the world, the belief, the bond, the grounding, the union, the release.

I cannot explain why it took me so long to get here, why all my study, meditation, art and vision had not brought me the solace to overcome. This fleeting moment had magic. It gave me lightness and clarity and maturity. Maybe I earned this light, at last ready to give up the struggle. I carry it with me as a talisman of all the energies of the universe connecting together to call me back and claim me and bind me and remind me of the deep significance of my life.

Everyday grace

Marianne Williamson

I have always wondered about God. I wondered about God as a child and I wonder about God now. For me, spiritual questioning is a lifelong process and the deeper our questioning, the deeper the answers when they are revealed.

I think everybody has spiritual questions, it's just that most people do not know it. I do not see spiritual questions as divorced from any other questioning about the nature of reality and how we, as human beings, fit into it. I try not to see the spiritual quest as something precious, above or even separate from the quest to simply live a deeper and more meaningful life.

I think all of us are trying to find answers for ourselves. The act of breathing is immersion in God. Every moment is a challenge to live more fully who we really are. That is the spiritual path.

I am a student of *A Course in Miracles*, not because the course tells me it is the only path, but simply because that's a path that spoke to me. The course is not a religion; it is psychological training in universal spiritual themes. Those universal spiritual themes are at the mystical core of all the great religious systems.

There is a story about a Buddhist monk pointing to the moon, and how some people mistakenly think the pointed finger is more important than the moon. The moon is what is important.

Who points out the moon, which religion or spiritual path is pointing out the moon to us, is not the issue.

In *A Course in Miracles* it says that the world we live in is dominated by a thought system based on fear, and has been, literally, for ages. So if you simply allow your mind to be trained by the status quo thinking of the world, you get lost in a miasma of illusion and fear. The word religion comes from the Latin root *religio*, which means to bind back. True religion is a process of binding your mind back to truth while living in a world that lures you away from it. What path we walk to seek escape from the spiritual ignorance of the world is not the issue; the issue is that we come to realize the power of prayer, meditation, forgiveness, charity and love in order to find the true light within us.

I am a Jew, and when you are born a Jew, you die a Jew. My Judaism informs my relationship to God very deeply, and it informs my philosophical, social and political views of the world as well. Judaism calls us to repair the world, or *Tikun Olam*, as part of our mission, part of our responsibility to God and our community.

Adapted from an interview.

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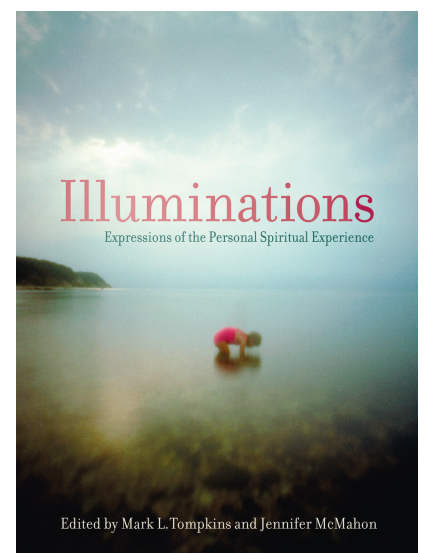


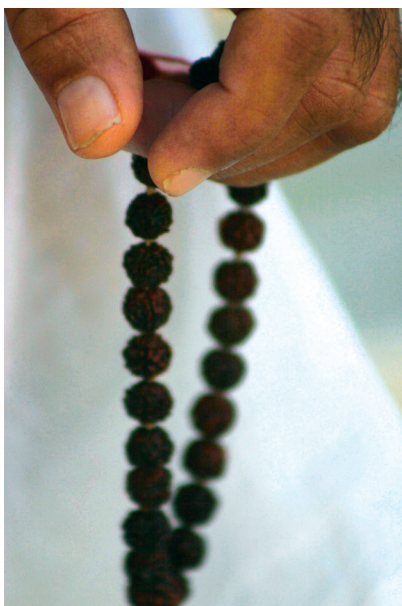
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EARTHFUTURE Guy Dauncey

ENVIRONMENT

Let me think aloud about our schools. I was told recently that when a group of children was shown 10 vegetables, they could identify only one: a tomato. When they were shown 10 corporate logos, they identified all 10. It makes you worry.

If we are to stop outstripping our planet's resources and navigate a way to a sustainable, low carbon-emission world, it is critical that our children learn what it means to live on this crowded Earth, with its growing forests, vast oceans and tiny creeks. So let me cast my thoughts ahead to the year 2015 and imagine that our teachers, parents, school boards and ministries of education have realized the urgency of what's needed.

Every school now has a garden where children learn to care for the soil, make compost, gather seeds and cultivate the fruits and vegetables they later eat at their own table.

By the time they leave school, students will have learned the harsh lesson of Easter Island: when humans over-consume resources, the result can be hunger, cultural collapse and death.

Every school instills its students with a passion for solutions. There are solar systems on the roofs, electric vehicles charged from the sun, and buildings are refashioned to make them a model of clean air, daylight, comfort and efficiency, with a green building budget to pay for the changes.

All children learn about the Earth's carbon cycle, what fossil fuels are and why their use is causing Earth's temperature to rise. Every spring, they calculate their personal carbon footprints and work with their schools to become carbon neutral.

Children are no longer ferried to school – and learning lazy habits – by their parents. Every student who lives within three kilometres or so of school either walks or cycles, as per the Safe Routes to School program (www.saferoutestoschool.ca) or a walking school bus, while the rest travel by alternatively fuelled school buses.

By the time they leave school, every student has spent a week in the wilderness, learning the rhythms of nature, the wisdom of the aboriginal elders and the resilience to live without email, instant messaging or cell phones.

They have also learned to appreciate Earth's oceans and the fragility of life within its waters. We are the generation that is driving every commercial fish stock to extinction by 2050 and if our

children do not learn otherwise, they will live in a world without fish.

They learn to appreciate water, how it cycles through the drains into the ocean and back through the sky as rain. Schools collect rainwater and use it to flush their toilets and irrigate their gardens.

By the time they leave school, every child has also visited a landfill where they have seen the mountains of garbage. They've connected it to their own behaviour and learned that there is no place called "away."

All these lessons are integrated into the curriculum as solar calculations in math, carbon cycles in geography, bicycle efficiency in physics and toxics reduction in chemistry.

How could we trigger this to happen? It could start with a contest in which one school challenges another to score more points for waste reduction, toxics reduction, trip reduction, energy efficiency, water efficiency, sustainable energy production, food production and healthy catering. Will one school step forward to issue the challenge? There are many skilled people within the environmental movement who could help you design the contest.

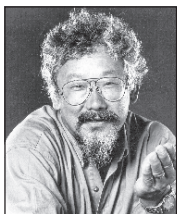
Now imagine a college announcing that starting in September 2008, every new student would be required to pass a test called Earth Literacy 101. This would require local schools to integrate eco-literacy into the curriculum, which would get the ball rolling. Reading and writing are fine, but if we lack Earth literacy, we'll have no civilization in which to practise them.

Teachers, will you write to your principals and school boards, and to the ministries of education, asking for help to make this a reality? Together, we can build a movement for Earth literacy that will change the face of education.

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Guy Dauncey is president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association (www.bcsea.org) and the author of several books about a positive future for our planet. (www.earthfuture.com)



Policy dooms BC caribou

SCIENCE MATTERS David Suzuki

How do you protect an endangered species? Well, if you're the government of BC, the answer is simple: you kill stuff. That may sound crude, but so is what the provincial government is considering doing to save an endangered population of caribou in the province.

Found in the eastern parts of BC, and down into Idaho where they are protected under the US Endangered Species Act, mountain caribou are one of the most endangered mammals in North America. Their population has declined alarmingly fast. While there were an estimated 2,500 animals in BC in the '90s, today there are fewer than 1,900.

To make matters worse, what historically had likely been one large population has been fragmented into as many as 18 sub-populations, some of which are completely isolated from one another. Such isolation raises problems of in-breeding and makes populations less likely to survive. Two of these small herds have recently disappeared altogether.

In 2004, the province convened a science team to assess the status of the caribou and provide options for the recovery of the species. This past fall, the panel reported back, providing a series of recommendations, from habitat protection, to controlling access to critical caribou habitat, to culling competing predators and prey.

Given that the primary, underlying threat to mountain caribou is habitat loss, the recommendation to protect habitat is not surprising. What is surprising, however, is that the government's announcement about recovery options and management actions didn't include maps of the caribou's core habitat or provide details about the recommended protected areas.

Instead, the announcement focused largely on just one of six potential actions: killing stuff. The theory is that if you kill the caribou's potential predators, such as grizzly bears, wolverines, cougars and wolves, along with competing prey, such as elk and moose, it reduces pressure on the mountain caribou. Yet the science panel itself was not definitive on the effectiveness of this action.

Killing other species in hopes of protecting a specific one is a risky and

ENVIRONMENT

unproven strategy. Everything we have learned about conservation biology tells us that ecosystems are extremely complex and interconnected. Crude, simplistic methods of human intervention are likely to prove unhelpful and potentially disastrous.

We also don't know how much of a factor illegal hunting has been in the caribou's decline. Recently, University of British Columbia researcher Peter

Arcese and others looked at the effectiveness of anti-poaching patrols in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park. Their findings, published in the journal *Science*,

reported that the abundance of a variety of species could be directly linked to the number of anti-poaching patrols conducted.

Dr. Arcese recently noted in the *Vancouver Sun* that mountain caribou in BC could be disappearing due to poaching, but we wouldn't know because there are so few officers patrolling the woods.

So here's the situation: we know that nature is decidedly complex and that invasive management techniques to recover species at risk rarely work. We know that logging is still allowed in mountain caribou habitat. We don't know how much illegal hunting is occurring because we don't have enough conservation officers or a comprehensive system to monitor poaching. And some of the creatures the government has suggested we kill to protect the caribou, such as grizzly bears and wolverines, are themselves threatened species.

Habitat protection won't save all the caribou, but it's the species' best bet and it will directly benefit hundreds of other species that share the same old-growth habitat. Protecting threatened species often requires making some tough decisions that can pit short-term economic goals against more sustainable long-term options.

Trying to take short cuts in conservation, by culling other creatures, may be politically expedient, but it's a risky strategy that history tells us is doomed to fail.

Join the Nature Challenge and learn more at (www.davidsuzuki.org).

Killing other species in hopes of protecting a specific one is a risky and unproven strategy.

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Adult fantasy leaves lasting impression

FILMS WORTH WATCHING Robert Alstead

CULTURE

Watching director Guillermo del Toro's haunting, gothic fantasy *Pan's Labyrinth* frequently brings to mind another fantastical story: *Alice in Wonderland*. Del Toro's *Labyrinth* features a plucky girl of Alice's age, who also finds herself facing many down-the-rabbit-hole situations, and encounters the strangest characters, except this is darker and the tone of the film often turns violent and disturbing.

Labyrinth may be a fantasy, but it is not suitable for children. As well as roaming the eerily surreal corners of gothic lore, and embellishing those traditions, by stint of fine storytelling the film weaves fantasy with a tense parallel plotline of wartime heroism that, in itself, takes on a mythic quality.

The setting is northern Spain in 1944. Ofelia, played with wide-eyed wonderment by Ivana Baquero, travels with her heavily-pregnant mother and a military escort to meet her sadistic stepfather, a fascist captain at a backwoods outpost, ruthlessly putting down local resistance. During a break in the journey, Ofelia wanders into the woods where a cricket appears to her as a fairy. The cricket befriends her and leads her to an ancient, stone maze near the old mill where she is staying. There, a faun tells her that she

is princess of an underworld kingdom and that she must complete three magical tasks in order to possess her throne.

Ofelia, too eager for adventure to question the "smelly, old faun," embarks eagerly on her mission that involves confronting a giant toad deep inside a big tree and escaping a baby-eating "Pale Man" in a secret chamber. Meanwhile, troubles of the real world continue to press upon her. Her mother's health goes downhill due to complications with the pregnancy, and as the battle in the woods heats up, Ofelia's stepfather grows colder and crueler toward her. As the proud, chauvinist *el capitaine*, Sergi Lopez is every bit a monster in human form, threatening not just young Ofelia, but also his housekeeper Mercedes (Maribel Verdu) who is linked to the resistance.

Del Toro draws fine performances from his entire cast, in addition to producing an exquisite-looking picture. The film may be tagged as horror, and certainly there are moments of shocking violence. Some might be put off from seeing *Pan's Labyrinth*, but the story is told with such skill and imagination that it creates a tense and emotional experience that leaves a lasting impression.

Canadian film moves to the fore with the annual *Moving Pictures: Canadian Films on Tour*, February 25-28, (www.movingpictures.ca). The festival opens with screenings at Tinseltown in Vancouver before travelling to Port Moody,



Nelson, Whitehorse and Kelowna, where local communities chose their own screening program from a pool of around 70 shorts, features and documentaries.

Festival organizer Sauching Ng says that the festival mixes mainstream with grassroots, and low budget productions with bigger budget films. This year, Vancouver's program includes *The Peace Tree*, a family drama in which Canadian children from two different religious backgrounds teach their elders the importance of celebrating each other's cultures; a program of Canadian shorts; and a special screening at the Vancity Theatre of the Canadian classic *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974), followed by a Q&A with director Ted Kotcheff. Strangely enough, Kotcheff also directed *Rambo: First Blood*.

Next – *A Primer on Urban Painting* by Pablo Aravena provides a comprehensive globetrotting guide to graffiti artists of the world, from the "wild style" of the '70s in New York's Bronx, to guer-

rilla artists in Tokyo today. My own feature documentary *You Never Bike Alone*, which I wrote about in the November issue of *Common Ground*, has its second-ever public screening at the fest.

The Vancouver leg of *Moving Pictures* ends with the home-grown romantic comedy *Everything's Gone Green*. *Gen X* author Douglas Coupland's first foray into dramatic screenwriting brings wry observations on life in Vancouver, showing a city of facades with its grow-ops, movie sets, shiny condos that sit empty, golf courses that act as covers for money laundering and so on. At the film's centre, there's a message about greed not bringing happiness, but it's wrapped in a lightweight package.

Robert Alstead recently completed *You Never Bike Alone*, a feature-length documentary about Vancouver's Critical Mass ride. More information and this month's screenings at (www.youneverbikealone.com).

Reckoning

TWENTY SOMETHING Ishi Dinim



Three years writing this column now and a huge nod to all those folks who have mentioned something along the way; your feedback continues to inspire and change the directions of my mind.

I really struggled to sit down and write something for this month's issue. There were quite a few lovely distractions and my mental space didn't give me much to write about. In my hermitting, however, there was one train of thought that

kept rattling around in there. I read the *Peak Oil* article in *Harper's* a while ago and it got me thinking more about how I might deal with catastrophic changes to my urban way of life.

Our recent local experiences with water turbidity, power outages, wind storms, falling trees, snow and ice are only a glimpse of a fraction of what could be coming to a city near you. Climate change disasters, viral epidemics or dwindling resources could easily sway people into behaving in a less than neighbourly manner.

There were men downtown in a big-box store beating each other up over bottles of water. I wonder if they knew they could boil the stuff out of the tap. I could just imagine all them Yaletown miniature dogs pulled out of their cute jackets to be tossed on the barbecue in a time of need.

The delicacy of our social fabric becomes apparent under very little duress. How might it rip apart if, say, we had limited – or none at all – running water, electricity, disposal facilities, gas or food? In a pinch, I'd trade my fancy, silk city shirt for a thick, country wool sweater.

This isn't an ominous conspiracy column about the end of the world, but there is some merit in pondering, even a little bit, what you might do if the end were nigh.

The enormous disconnect between people and the production of what they need to survive surprises and frightens me constantly. When we start asking ourselves, "What would I do if...?" we might then be more prepared to move towards a sustainable way of life.

As you read this, I hope to be in Africa travelling to Uganda and Malawi. It is time to shake myself out of what I know and apply some of my dreams of using

my art to help others again. Culture shock here I come, with a camera in each hand.

Links:

www.studsterkel.org
www.savedarfur.org

Quotes:

We turn not older with years, but newer every day. – Emily Dickinson
Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him. – Aldous Huxley, *Texts and Pretexts*, 1932

Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti and ponders many things. Currently, he is trying to figure out what to do with the rest his life. (contactishi@yahoo.ca)

Letters to the editor

Be part of the global warming solution

I wish to compliment *Common Ground* on its articles about global warming, particularly the excellent pieces *Get Out and Look at the World Melting Mr. Harper* by David Suzuki and *A Prayer at a Time of Crisis* by Guy Dauncey, both in the December edition.

On a recent *Oprah Winfrey Show*, Al Gore called for people to organize thousands of house parties across the planet to discuss global warming. Let's make that a vision for our Kitsilano and Point Grey communities. A forum on global warming takes place on February 12 at the Ridge Theatre, 3131 Arbutus Street, 7 PM, featuring the powerful documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. A five-person panel will focus on solutions, followed by a Q&A session, a short refreshment break (bring your own cup) and a free 9 PM screening of the documentary. Admission is by donation or free for those with low income. To guarantee a seat, or to join our event car pool, email (gwforum@telus.net) or visit (www3.telus.net/gwforum).

Speakers include UBC climatologist Philip Austin, SFU economist Mark Jacard, Graham Kissak of Catalyst Paper, Ian Bruce from the David Suzuki Foun-

dation and Dan Rogers, president of the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation. I know your readership wants to become part of the solution; here is a place to start.

Shane Koscielniak, Vancouver
(shane.koscielniak@telus.net)

Will the wireless industry guarantee cell phone safety?

Your article on cell phones and industry whistleblower Dr. George Carlo (*Cell Phones: Invisible Hazards of the Wireless Age*, December 2006) was well timed, just as the press around the world was heralding an extensive Danish study that supports industry claims that cell phones are safe.

Don't you find it interesting that this industry-funded study was released just in time for the Christmas frenzy? This year, there's a dazzling array of wireless gifts, but do any of them come with health warnings? It has been documented that radiation from them penetrates the brain. The Danish study was funded by the wireless industry; fair enough, we know that all studies are funded. In this case, however, the public has the right to know what the effects are. Cell phone safety is a serious health issue and there are many reputable studies indicating

significant biological effects, including penetration of radiation into the brain, leakage of the blood brain barrier and breakage of the DNA.

Common Ground has a great track record of seeking the truth; will you approach some industry participants for their guarantees that there are no health problems, and that cell phones are safe for consumers and for our children? And will they go on record and indicate how many minutes a month we can use cell phones without harm? Do you agree that consumers have a right to know who refuses your request?

Dr. Kerry Crofton, *Well Being International*, Victoria [Ed: See Dr. Carlo's rebuttal on p.11 of this issue.]

Canadian Wheat Board is still at risk

The Conservatives are still leading a minority government with an agenda to kill the Canadian prairies. It's a critical assault to the fabric of Canada, and, if successful, would destroy the bridge between our East and West. Canada so weakened would be very much easier to assimilate. The new premier in Alberta now has his hands full. He could just be a lame duck; we don't know yet. Meanwhile, Sté-

phane Dion, our new Liberal opposition leader, has made statements in support of the Canadian Wheat Board. His priorities are to consolidate the Libs' Rae and Ignatieff factions, get Quebec in place and strengthen a base in Ontario. The West may not matter that much to Dion. The Cons could slide through the middle and still destroy the CWB before an election call. All the Cons need is the Bloc on the vote and it's a done deal, and if the Cons give the Bloc a good reason to support the CWB wipe-out (like ripping apart the Lib base in Quebec). They will comply.

Thus, don't cry victory until the knife has killed the beast and the body burned. This is political war for the heartland of Canada and there are too many reasons pointing out that the Cons will persevere in their sell-off of Canada. They may not get another chance as good as this again to rip the guts out of the Canadian prairies for a long time to come. Remember, we have two more years to bring the awareness levels up to a point where this treacherous agenda is fully understood by the majority of Canadians. The real and final battles are just beginning and a lot of political blood will be spilled before it's over.

Charles J. Walter

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Making sense of seed catalogues

ORGANICS

ON THE GARDEN PATH Carolyn Herriot

Gardeners are always eager to plunge into the world of seed catalogues, but the information can be both tempting and confusing. Knowing how to interpret symbols, abbreviations and classifications will help you get the most from the catalogues.

If you are an organic gardener, you'll want seeds that have not been treated or genetically modified (GM) and ideally, organically grown. Some catalogues clearly state that a company does not sell treated or GM seeds. Treatment usu-

ally consists of coating seeds with a fungicide against soil-borne pathogens to assist with earlier planting. Organic seeds are more readily available today, as seed growers shift their methods of cultivation to meet changing organic standards.

ally consists of coating seeds with a fungicide against soil-borne pathogens to assist with earlier planting. Organic seeds are more readily available today, as seed growers shift their methods of cultivation to meet changing organic standards.

Each year, catalogues are filled with pages of exciting new introductions, the work of plant breeders promoting new hybrid varieties. F1 means first filial generation; F1 hybrids are the first generation produced by crossing unlike parents to create offspring that exhibit hybrid vigour and uniformity. Hybrids are not stable, so seeds saved from F1 plants will not grow true to type and characteristics may revert to the parent strains. The original crossing must therefore be repeated each year.

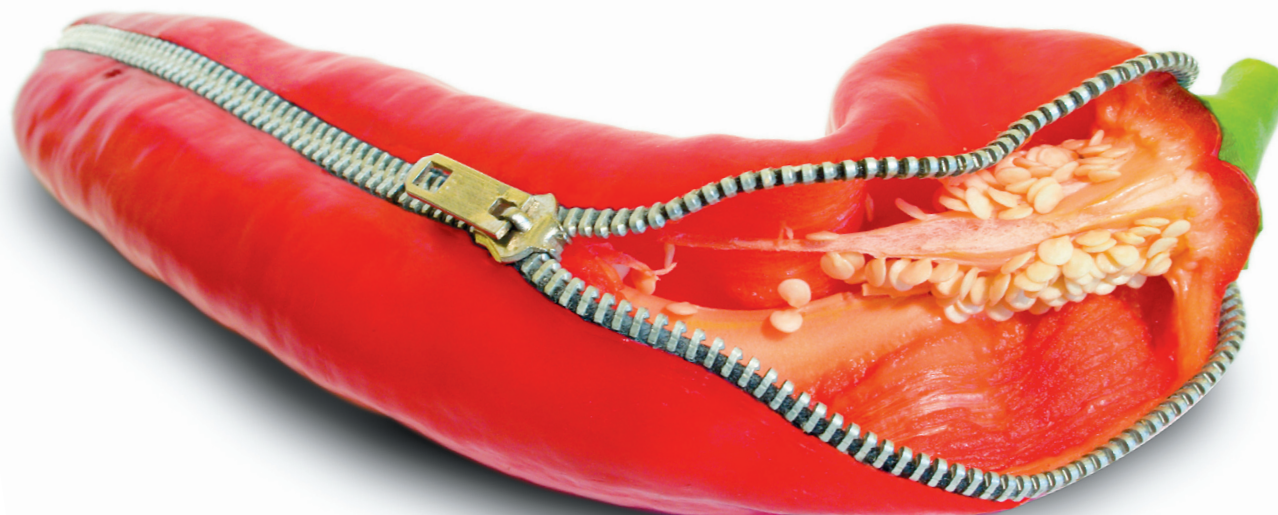
Hybrids are fine unless you want diversity or plan to save your own seeds. Hybrid varieties have been developed for farmers who seek uniformity for harvesting. Home gardeners don't want vegetables that all ripen at the same time and they don't care if they are not all the

same size. For greater diversity and for seed saving, select only open-pollinated vegetable seeds and seeds of flower species. The term open-pollinated indicates that agents of nature – the wind and bees – have pollinated the flowers, and that the resulting seeds will come true.

Many plants are designated as heirloom, heritage or traditional, but the distinction is confusing. While there are no universally accepted definitions for these terms, the following works for me: heritage or traditional varieties

their common names. Check the botanical name and don't rely on the common name only, which may vary among catalogues. By knowing the genus, species and varietal name, you can be sure of what you are ordering.

Quantities of seeds offered vary from sample packets to full ounces; the more you buy, the cheaper the seeds. Flower seeds often have a shelf life of several years, so buying larger quantities can be economical, as you can save some seeds to grow in future years.



were developed more than 50 years ago and include many that are commercially developed. Heirloom varieties have been preserved by home gardeners and private individuals and are passed down from generation to generation.

Flower seeds are categorized as HHA, HA, BI, TP and HP. Hardy annuals (HA) can stand some frost and may be sown in early spring. Half-hardy annuals (HHA) are killed by frost and may be sown outdoors in late spring or earlier in a greenhouse or under grow lights. Transplant outdoors only after all danger of frost has passed. Sow biennials (BI) early and plant outdoors to overwinter and flower the following season. Hardy perennials (HP) may flower the first year from seed if started early in a greenhouse or cold frame, and will overwinter if grown in the appropriate climate zone. Tender perennials (TP) need extra protection from winter and may need to be brought into a greenhouse.

Seeds are usually listed alphabetically under their botanical names, followed by

The days to maturity stated does not always reflect the difference between plants that are direct seeded and those grown from six-week-old transplants. In the case of transplants, you'll need to calculate if your growing season is long enough. To the days of maturity given, add approximately seven days for germination, 42 days for the transplant to develop, and possibly another 21 days for ripening in a cool summer season. This could double the days to maturity from 70 to 140.

Browsing seed catalogues is always fun. Many are full of invaluable, cultural information – even recipes – but reading the small print and knowing how to interpret the information will help you get the most from them.

Extracted from A Year on the Garden Path: A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide by Carolyn Herriot. Second Edition \$24.95. Available from your favourite bookstore or order online at (www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath).



An even more inconvenient truth

NUTRISPEAK Vesanto Melina MS, RD

HEALTH

What can you do?

Start cutting back on meat and dairy products, if you haven't already. Even if you don't become entirely vegetarian, every plant-based meal is a vote of love for the planet. You'll be doing future generations, and your own health, a huge favour. You can also join Earthsave Canada, a lively, local, non-profit organization that hosts regular dine-outs, dinners and educational events. (www.earthsav.ca) or 604-731-5885.

*Vesanto Melina is a registered dietitian and consultant in Langley, BC. Her books *Becoming Vegetarian* (Melina and Davis, Wiley Canada) and *Becoming Vegan* (Davis and Melina, the Book Publishing Company) provide the foundation for a nutritionally-adequate, plant-based diet. *Becoming Vegetarian* also provides a core group of delicious and simple recipes. (www.nutrispeak.com) (vesanto@nutrispeak.com) 604-882-6782.*

Resources:

1. *An Inconvenient Truth*: The DVD is available for purchase at (www.climatecrisis.net) or at your video store.

2. *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* (Steinfeld et al, 2006) Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations. See the full report at (www.virtualcentre.org/en/library/key_pub/longshad/A0701E00.pdf) (*See page 299.) View the executive summary at (www.virtualcentre.org/en/library/key_pub/longshad/A0701E00.htm#sum).

Ed: Read part two of this article in the February issue of *Common Ground*.

The documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* is superb. The film, featuring former US vice president Al Gore and his travelling show about global climate change, received a standing ovation at the Sundance Film Festival in 2006. The documentary does an outstanding job of presenting material in a manner that holds audiences spellbound, inviting the participation of mainstream North Americans in a way that is likely to get results.

While the documentary dramatically summarizes a mass of material about the plight of our dear planet Earth, and reveals how our actions create negative impact, it misses one inconvenient truth: the documentary fails to recognize the impact of dietary choices on global warming.

I have long been baffled by the fact that environmentalists have routinely disregarded dietary issues, and until three years ago, few articles linking food choices with climate change appeared in scientific publications. Is it because a truth that calls for a change in our daily eating habits hit too close to home?

As 2006 came to a close, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) issued a report entitled *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options*, which stated that cattle in the meat and dairy industries generate more global warming greenhouse gases than can be blamed on transportation and vehicle use combined.

According to Henning Steinfeld,

chief of the livestock information and policy branch at FAO, and senior author of the report, "Livestock are one of the most significant contributors to today's most serious environmental problems. Urgent action is required to remedy the situation."

Livestock accounts for 65 percent of human-related nitrous oxide, most of which is derived from the immense quantities of manure that is an essential by-product of raising livestock. This gas

I have long been baffled by the fact that environmentalists have routinely disregarded dietary issues, and until three years ago, few articles linking food choices with climate change appeared in scientific publications. Is it because a truth that calls for a change in our daily eating habits hit too close to home?

has 296 times the global warming potential of CO₂.

Livestock industries are responsible for 37 percent of all human-induced methane, which is 23 times as warming as CO₂. Methane is produced by the digestive system of ruminants – beef and dairy cattle and sheep – which also produce 64 percent of the ammonia, thereby contributing significantly to acid rain. Cattle-rearing is a major source of land and water degradation as well.

The UN report recognizes with opti-

mism those consumers who are using their growing voice and spending power to exert pressure for change. *In this context, the report acknowledges trends toward organic food, sustainable agriculture, vegetarian diets and healthier eating habits.

While many Canadians are cutting back on meat, this is not representative of the trend worldwide. The UN report notes that, with increased prosperity, every year people consume more meat

and dairy products globally. At current rates, global meat production is projected to more than double from 229 million tons between 1999 and 2001 to 465 million tons in 2050, and milk production is expected to increase from 580 million tons to one billion tons.

Of course, with these dietary changes, rates of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, colon cancer, hormone-related breast and prostate cancers, obesity and diabetes are also increasing in developing countries.

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Strahl attacks Canadian Wheat Board

Farmers losing grain sale options

by Wendy R. Holm, PAg.



Holm walking with farmers at a Saskatoon rally in July to protest Chuck Strahl's closed door meetings on the fate of the CWB.

For absolutely no good reason and a lot of very bad ones, BC's own Chuck Strahl, minister of agriculture and, ironically, minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, has taken dead aim at the CWB, placing the future of prairie farmers and the communities they serve at risk.

A few days before Christmas, Strahl fired highly respected Canadian Wheat Board CEO Adrian Measner, a 32-year veteran of the organization, and replaced him with a Harper "yes man."

This is but the latest act in a litany of abuse that began back on July 27, 2006 when Agriculture Minister Strahl held a roundtable meeting in Saskatoon on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board to which *only* those who agreed with abolishing the single desk selling authority of the board were invited.

That afternoon Strahl told journalists his government would *not* be bound by Section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, which prohibits any changes to the marketing of grain in Western Canada unless supported by a producer vote.

Then there was the September 19 email from Regina-based Charleton Communications to Western Canada Wheat Growers and others claiming, "The other side is embarrassing us with their propaganda" and that "...government, MPs and others..." had suggested "...we must get into the game with letters to the editor in weeklies, dailies and agriculture trade publications." Charleton Communications offered to write letters from farmers to be sent to local and regional papers "...at least five letters a week "...backing government's position on the CWB ...this would get us into the propaganda game and save you people

time." Who put Charleton up to this?

There was Strahl's October 5 gag order prohibiting directors and staff of the Canadian Wheat Board from defending the CWB's role as the single-desk seller of Western Canadian wheat and barley.

Then there was Strahl's removal this past fall of two CWB appointed directors (one fired for supporting the single

a crop rotation, or still had crops in the bin. And to make matters worse, Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl actively campaigned for and endorsed the anti-CWB directors.

What Strahl didn't count on was the public backlash his actions would evoke.

On October 25, Bill C-300, a private member's bill tabled by Gerry Ritz, chair

This is but the latest act in a litany of abuse that began back on July 27, 2006 when Agriculture Minister Strahl held a roundtable meeting in Saskatoon on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board to which *only* those who agreed with abolishing the single desk selling authority of the board were invited.

desk authority of the CWB, one given a plum post for stepping down), replaced by two anti-CWB directors who are, in the words of former CWB director Art Macklin, "blatant, partisan patronage appointments."

Next came Strahl's October 17 order, in the middle of the CBW election, to remove 36 percent of Western Canada grain growers – 16,269 farmers – from the list of eligible voters. This year, five directors were elected in a vote that ran from September 5 to December 1. Electoral districts had 25 to 48 percent of eligible voters cut from their lists; only farmers that had sold grain through the CWB in the past 15 months were eligible.

This disenfranchised farmers who: had sold domestically during that period, were victims of flood, drought, or bad harvest weather, were in the middle of

of the agriculture committee that would have removed the single desk authority of the CWB, went down to defeat (149-111) in the House. (To his great credit, Inky Mark, four-term MP for Dauphin-Swan River-Marquette, was the sole Conservative to oppose Harper and vote against Bill C-300.)

On November 1, the government also lost (155-121) an important vote on a motion put forward by the Opposition calling for a producer vote on any changes to the CWB.

In the recent board election, farmers solidly supported the CWB, returning pro-CWB directors in four out of five districts. The only "pro-choice" director was elected in District 1, where about half of eligible farmers were stripped of their voting rights by Strahl in mid-election.

Undaunted, Strahl forges ahead, saying

what he can't do with legislation, he will do with regulation. By stacking the board with political appointments (government appoints 5 directors, farmers elect 10), Strahl has created an 8/7 split on the board. By replacing CEO Adrian Measner with another "yes man" Strahl has created a board at war with itself. Farmers are outraged. As is this agrologist.

What could justify such an assault on good public policy? When in doubt, follow the money: If farmers lose power, who gains power? (Hint: eliminating the CWB has topped the US agricultural wish list since the mid 1980s.)

Obviously, concentrated transnational grain companies will have access to cheaper grain. In early December, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool announced its bid to take over Agricore United. Archer Daniel Midland (ADM) would have control through options of over 21 percent of the new, merged entity, making it the largest single shareholder of the new company that would control 44 percent of the grain elevators in Western Canada and the lion's share of the grain handling facilities at ports.

Posted on ADM's website is the Reuters story: *Canada Minister Upbeat on Saskpool-Agricore Deal*. In it, Strahl actually praises the merger – still to be reviewed by the Competition Bureau – as a "good thing" because it could "create a Canadian grain powerhouse."

Powerhouse indeed. Family farms will go under, replaced by mega-farms. Canadian grain will go south to bolster the export quality of inferior US grain and BC's port handling facilities for grain will all but shut down, and with them, jobs. What is Strahl thinking?

For companies like Monsanto, getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board would eliminate a strong and vocal farmer advocate that has become a thorn in its side frustrating expansion plans. CWB's intervention was largely responsible for preventing Canadian registration of Monsanto's copyrighted and monopolized transgenic Roundup-ready wheat.

Then there is always cheap feedstock for ethanol. As large energy companies reposition themselves to compete in a non-fossil fuel market, rapid expansion in ethanol production is part of the forecast. Currently, there are over 1,000 retail locations selling ethanol-blended gasoline in Canada. Meeting a Natural Resources Canada-cited target of 35 percent of Canadian gasoline containing 10 percent ethanol by 2010 will require 1.4 billion litres of ethanol per year from 4.2 million tonnes of wheat grown on 3.5 million acres of land.

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BOOKS • ART



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Opportunity" be considered before any decision is made. During the decision making process these principles must be fully examined to eliminate or reduce the potential for damage. How many historic tragedies could have been avoided had we followed the simple advice of these

Chinese wise men? In our dangerous and pressing days, the need is for finding our way to global efforts, in collaboration, in cooperation for the control of climate change, with peace following this common and giant effort!


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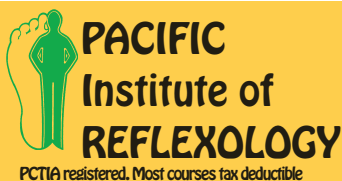
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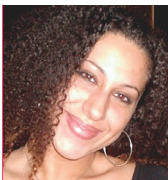
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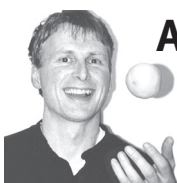
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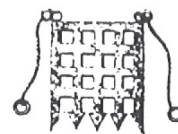


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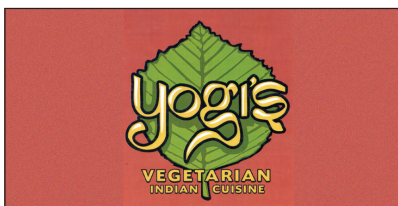
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— Thomas Edison —

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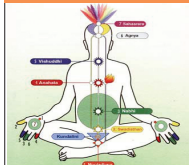
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Science of Spirituality is a multi-faith international organization dedicated to love, unity and peace under the direction of Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj. A world-renowned spiritual Master, who teaches a simple yet transformative meditation technique for all. All SOS programs are FREE. **Every Sunday - 11011**

Shell Road, Richmond (SW corner Steveston Hwy & Shell Road) 10AM Meditation, 11AM Spiritual Discourse (Satsang) Judy:604-530-0589 Sun., Dec. 3rd & Sun., Dec. 17th 9AM Meditation and 10AM Live Broadcast with Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj. To all of our brothers and sisters, whatever our beliefs,

faith or customs, at this time of year we invite you to pray with us, "Let us put our heads and our hearts together and find ways and means to practically knit the world together in love. Let us spread the fragrance of God's love and make human integration a reality." Sant Rajinder Singh www.sos.org

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Unitarian Church of Vancouver: 604-261-7204 or www.vancouver.unitarians.ca

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SUNDAY SERVICES 11:00 am – See **DATEBOOK: Sundays**

WEDNESDAYS: Jan 3 Lesley Prentis Mediumship • Jan 10 Lyn Wells Open Circle • Jan 17 Anne Beveridge Meet Your Guides in a Celebration of Your Spirit Self • Jan 24 Joyce Tarvin Practise Your Evolving Abilities • Jan 31 Ted Kuntz, author *Peace Begins With Me* • **MEMBERS \$7 NON-MEMBERS \$8**

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Wheat Board from p. 24

This represents 18 percent of the tonnage and 14 percent of the land seeded to wheat in Western Canada in 2006.

That production capacity is already well under way. Under its ethanol expansion program, Natural Resources Canada just funded \$78 million in projects by Suncor, Husky and others to meet this target, adding 750 million litres of annual fuel ethanol capacity and quadrupling Canadian production to almost 1 billion litres. This capacity alone will require 3 million tonnes of feed grain from 2.5 million acres (13 percent of tonnage and 10 percent of land). On November 8, ADM announced it plans to dominate the global ethanol market.

In any regulated sector, there are always a few dissidents who get a lot of print by insisting their freedoms have been curtailed. Supply management farmers are familiar with this. In the case

of grains, the strategy has been to hang an important name around their neck and to hit the media running. Makes the public think even farmers are divided. In fact, with an estimated membership of fewer than 400, the Western Canada Wheat Growers Association represents less than one percent of grain farmers.

Make no mistake, Strahl's unprecedented and unacceptable attack on the rights of Western Canadian wheat and barley growers will destroy the CWB. Without central desk selling, the prairie farmers of Western Canada will be easy pickings for the highly concentrated transnational grain corporations.

If government can wreak this policy abuse upon Canada's grain growers, no commodity sector is safe.

Stand up for Canada's farmers. Tell Chuck Strahl that a politician that doesn't respect the rights of Canada's farmers does not have the support of his constituents.

Strahl is the MP for Chilliwack and the Fraser Canyon, 1-800-667-2808; send emails to: (riding@chuckstrahl.com), (Strahl.C@parl.gc.ca) and (Harp-er.S@parl.gc.ca).

Wendy Holm is an award-winning agrologist, economist and journalist (holm@farmertofarmer.ca). More information on the CWB is posted on her website (www.theholmteam.ca).

Hampering journalism in the cause of greed

Editor's note: Holm, a popular monthly opinion columnist for the *Western Producer*, was dismissed following her participation in the July 27 pro-Wheat-Board farmer rally in Saskatoon. Holm was there at her own expense as a concerned agrologist. She attended the minister's 6 PM media conference as a freelance columnist for the *Western Pro-*

ducer, and asked if he was prepared to move without a grower plebiscite.

The column she wrote and filed concerning the events of July 27 never appeared in the *Producer*. It was printed in *Common Ground* magazine September 2006. Ironically, her February 9 *Western Producer* column *Dual Desk Is Code for Disaster* won her a 2006 national journalism award from the Canadian Farm Writers and Broadcasters in September.

It is important to note that the *Western Producer* is wholly owned by Glacier Ventures, a VSE company initially formed to export bottled water. Glacier Ventures now owns the bulk of Western Canada's farm and community newspapers. Agricore United's CEO sits on the Glacier board. Agricore United stands to profit greatly from the demise of the Canadian Wheat Board. Archer Daniels Midland is Agricore United's major shareholder.

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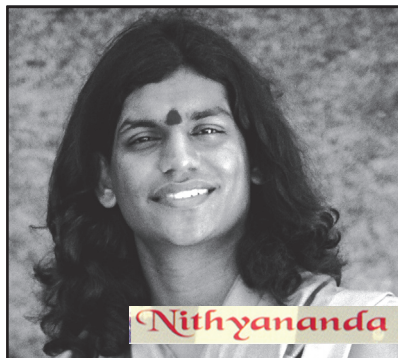
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JAN 9 Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle/Workshop:

Saturday, 7pm. Experience insight/healing from your Nature Spirit guardians. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Centre, 1254 W. 7th. Donation. Turtle Island Healing Circles. 604.418.9636 (www.drumcircles.ca).

JAN 10 Waitaha Circle - metaphysical and communication

exploration. Explore/present topics of interest to you. Supportive/encouraging atmosphere. Nikkei Centre, Burnaby, 7pm. Info: Call Parin 604-298-4975.

JAN 13-14 "Attract Your Soulmate" Singles Workshop:

Attract the right partner and experience mutual growth and quality long-lasting love. Members \$195, Non-Members \$295. 604-731-1783 or 1-888-521-1113. (www.HeartSongSolutions.ca)

JAN 17 - FEB 21 Dreams: Come and discuss the richness and creativity of your dreams.

You'll learn safe, effective ways to explore and remember them. Unitarian Church, Oak & 49th streets, 7-9:15pm, 604-261-7204. \$30 donation to be given to the church.

JAN 19-21 Gabriola Island Film Festival -

Community Hall. Featured films include Whaledreamers (new from Australia), Bullshit, featuring activist Vandana Shiva, and 360°, a documentary about England's crop circles of 2005, & more (www.filmgabriola.com)

JAN 19, 20, 21 Foot Reflexology Introduction

commences certificate weekend course. Intro: \$10, Course \$295. Pacific Institute of Reflexology, (604) 875-8818 (www.pacificreflexology.com)

JAN 20 Free Pre-Retirement Coaching Seminar:

Live Your Dream, Sooner! Define Retirement on Your Terms. Retirement readiness: Socially, emotionally, career and family. Register (www.ShiftingGears.ca). Quote Ticket #CC1234 for FREE ADMISSION.

JAN 20 Community Potluck/Discussion on "Spiritual Relationship:

Bridging the Gender Gap".

Fun, inspiring evening exploring love, life and consciousness. \$10 advance, \$15 on site. 604-731-1783/1-888-521-1113. (www.HeartSongSolutions.ca)

JAN 20 Acupuncture lectures and demo and Fengshui seminar

8 hours long soon in Vancouver. Info: (www.acuqimed.com) or call 604-961-8834 Acupuncture treatment available at Broadway Station.

JAN 21 BodyTalk Vancouver Community Clinic

(downtown Vancouver). Experience a BodyTalk session with certified practitioners. Suggested donation \$20. Net proceeds to the practitioners' charities. 10am-5pm. By appointment. BodyTalk Vancouver 778-389-7909, (info@bodytalkvancouver.com).

JAN 27 Life Between Lives past lives and karma Free talk by Rifa

Hodgson, CLBLt. 10am, West Vancouver Memorial Library, 1950 Marine Drive (rifa@lifebetweenlives.ca) 1-888-606-TIME.

JAN 27 World renowned pianists Yaroslav Senyshyn & Alan Kogosowski

present Travels with Franz Liszt, 7:30pm, Massey Theatre, New Westminster. Tickets 888-222-6608 (www.ticketweb.ca) \$25, \$20/seniors & students.

JAN 27-28 "Practical Skills for Blissful Relationships" Couples Workshop:

Transformational techniques to be each other's greatest ally in growth and bliss. Couples: \$500, Individuals, \$295. 604-731-1783/1-888-521-1113. (www.HeartSongSolutions.ca)

JAN 28 Connect With Angels Workshop Angel Card Reader and Magical Manifesting:

Learn about Angels and how to give readings. Learn how to manifest abundance and your heart's desires. Register at (www.spiritsay.com) or call 778-388-5477

JAN 28 Gung Haggis Fat Choy:

Toddish McWong's Annual Robbie Burns Chinese New Year dinner, Floata Restau-

rant, 400-180 Keefer St (Chinatown). Reception: 5:30pm. Dinner/show: 6pm. Live music. Tickets Firehall Arts Centre, 604-689-0926.

JAN 28 & 30 "Freedom to Fascism":

Must see documentary! January 28: 12:30/2:45pm. January 30: 7:00/9:15pm Pacific Cinematheque, 1131 Howe St. \$10/\$8, 604-327-9140.

FEB 5-11 Talking Stick Festival:

A celebration of contemporary aboriginal performance and art. Tickets \$15, \$12/seniors & students. Call 604-683-0497. Opening gala features Margo Kane. Visit (www.fullcircle.ca) for daily schedule & information.

FEB 9-11 The World Community Film Festival

features over 30 documentary films on social justice, environmental and global issues at Langara College. See (www.codev.org/filmfest) for details.

FEB 12 Global Warming Forum:

7pm, Ridge Theatre, 3131 Arbutus. Free or by donation. Moderator: Erica Johnston, CBC. Speakers include UBC climatologist Philip Austin, SFU economist Mark Jaccard, Graham Kissak of Catalyst Paper, Ian Bruce from the David Suzuki Foundation. Screening of An Inconvenient Truth, 9pm. To guarantee a seat, or to join the event car pool, email (gwforum@telus.net). (www3.telus.net/gwforum)

FEB 16 BC Civil Liberties Association and UBC sponsor Maher Arar

at The Chan Centre. Call Sarah 604-687-2919 for tickets and membership information. Sponsored in part by Common Ground.

MAR 2, 3, 4. Foot Reflexology Introduction

commences certificate weekend course. Intro: \$10, Course \$295. Pacific Institute of Reflexology, (604) 875-8818 (www.pacificreflexology.com)

MAR 2-4 The Wellness Show:

Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre (Canada Place, under the Five Sails), \$10 general admission, \$8.50/seniors & students, \$4/children 6-15, \$26 3-day pass. Event information 604-983-

2794 (www.thewellnessshow.com).

SATURDAYS

Holistic Healing Fair:

Third Saturday of every month. AWAKENING HEART-15177 Russell Ave-White Rock. 10-4pm. Free Admission. 604-535-6603 or (www.emergingpathway.ca).

SUNDAYS

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International Spiritualist Alliance:

#201-317 Columbia Street, New West, 604-521-6336. Sunday services, 11am. Rev. Joyce Tarvin, 604-433-6663. See Resource Directory (www.isacanada.ca).

Mountaintop Unity Find a positive New Thought approach

to life at Unity! Sundays 10:30am, John Braithwaite Community Centre, 145 W. 1st, North Vancouver. 604-787-1477 (www.unitymountaintop.ca).

MONDAYS

Speaking Circles:

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TUESDAYS

Pranic Healing Clinics:

Non-touch energy healing. By donation. Tuesdays 11am-3pm and 6pm-9pm. 2950 Laurel St, Vancouver. Closed last Tuesday of month (www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver).

Reflexology Student Clinic

sessions, only \$18. Evenings only. By appointment. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604-875-8818 (www.pacificreflexology.com).

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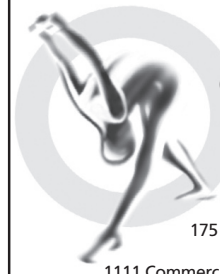
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Hawaiian Medicine Circle: 7 pm. Hawaiian guided meditation, Sharing the Aloha, tea and snacks afterwards with like-minded people. \$10 donation. At Hale Ola, a place of Healing, 1215 Madison Ave., Burnaby. 604-431-7474. Call Kumu Kaimana.

Meditation & Self-inquiry: Have you lost the balance and rhythm in your life? Let stillness (through self-inquiry) return your wholeness. 5-7pm, 604-317-1613.

Children of War fundraiser: Chai Gallery at East Is East hosts a fundraiser for Children of War (www.thechildrenofwar.org) featuring local musicians & traditional dancers. Every Wed. evening, 7:30pm - 1:30am, 3243 W. Broadway. \$25/door or call 778-837-1862.

THURSDAYS

Pranic Healing Clinic: Non-touch energy healing. By donation. West Vancouver United Church, 2062 Esquimalt Ave. Thursdays 10am-2pm. Closed last Thursday of month (www.pranichealing.ca/vancouver).

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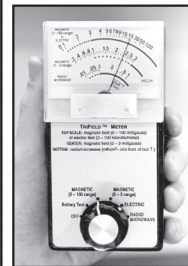
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On Track Zodiac

JANUARY 2007 Ilona Hedi Granik



ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 19)

You may feel that you want to mark your territory as a way to protect what is yours, and to ensure safety. You may also wish to demonstrate your leadership to others. Be constructive and utilize the powerful energy that is readily available. Aries, the warrior, will not jeopardize either his partnerships or his circle of unity.



TAURUS (Apr 20 - May 21)

Some very deep-seated and tightly rooted fears and beliefs will loosen and be exposed. This could be a fearful time or one of exhilaration as you push through each barrier. You may first become unglued and then renewed. Develop skills to improve your intelligence; you will be triumphant.



GEMINI (May 22 - Jun 20)

You could find that your general discomposure makes for some interesting, emotional scenarios. You will lose the gloom as you create a rich, inner life. If you see the world as unforgiving, it will hinder your progress. Stay flexible in body and mind as you move through challenges that will dissolve in good time.



CANCER (Jun 21 - Jul 22)

Your need to take care of someone or something is becoming a central line of intention. Ultra sensitivity is your strong suit, but being a pillar of strength for others may not be a typical Cancerian trait. However, you are demonstrating both well. You ask what your purpose is. Well, you already know.



LEO (Jul 23 - Aug 22)

Any behaviour on your part to sidestep your responsibilities will bring consequences. Saturn is in your sign and it brings with it much personal growth. Your rite of passage is to become more disciplined. Move over self importance; make room for the taskmaster and seize the day.



VIRGO (Aug 23 - Sep 22)

So many changes and diverse challenges in what seems to be arduous times. While everything may seem different and foreign, in actuality, everything isn't. It is you who have changed; you've become more courageous and alert. You are exactly where you need to be, in perfect synchronicity.



LIBRA (Sep 23 - Oct 22)

Your outlook is fanciful and has elements of grace and innocence. The worn-out armour, facades and masks have lost their usefulness and you brandish a gentler approach. Coming full circle, it seems you step into a new balance and realize your dreams.



SCORPIO (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Watch out for that flamboyant spending streak. You could rack up some financial debt by accumulating things on a whim. Any addictions or patterns, which continue imbalanced, will hit a wall. Your attitude of gratitude will save you. Using less bravado, usher in success through simplicity.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

January could prove to be a time of risk taking and bargaining. Where you usually exhibit a moderate temperament, business intrigues you and new ideas pop into your head causing you to act on those impulses. These can be thrilling times for you; make the most of it in both thought and deed.



CAPRICORN (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

As pressures of the last few months dissipate, the doors of perception and opportunity open. You make plans and set goals and no longer wish to shield yourself from connecting with others. Chances are you will look to improve your relationships. That which you seek, you are sure to find.



AQUARIUS (Jan 20 - Feb 19)

Your mental energy could be stimulating you into a frenzy of euphoria and rebellion. If you don't focus and seek balance, you could fly off the handle at the smallest incident. One is either mystified by life or becomes enlightened enough to watch their own process and change self-defeating habits. Treat yourself to soft and gentle pleasures.



PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Live in the moment because you never know what will happen next. While changes excite you, you also want to push the boundaries. You don't want to be tied down. Always on the move, you continue to adjust to present circumstances. Govern your health to stay highly tuned; you are a divine instrument.

Ilona Hedi Granik is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 32 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing. (iamilona@gmail.com) (www.HeartLightCentre.com).

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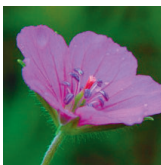
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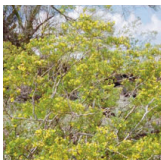
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